

A CHURCH HONORING TRADITION THROUGH THE WORD
OF GOD IN A DIMINISHING COMMUNITY

Tony J. Craddock, Sr.

BS, Columbia Union College, 2006
MDiv, Virginia Union University, 2010

Mentors

Gerald M. Young, DMin
Alfred L. Thompson, DMin

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Date: _____

Approved:

Faculty Mentor:

Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies:

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
DEDICATION	viii
ILLUSTRATIONS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS.....	5
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	30
Old Testament	
New Testament	
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS	73
Headings within the Main Body	
Conclusion	
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	101
Headings within the Main Body	
Conclusion	
5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS	127
Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice	
Conclusion	
6. PROJECT ANALYSIS	154

The Role of the Researcher

Methodology

Implementation

Summary of Learning

Conclusion

APPENDIX

A.	NARRATIVE RESEARCH CONSENT FORM.....	191
B.	QUALITATIVE NARRATIVE RESEARCH EVALUATION FORM.	195
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	198

ABSTRACT

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Mount Olive Baptist Church in Rectortown, Virginia is the context of this project. The purpose of this project is to address why membership in churches across America is rapidly fading and how tradition has contributed to that decline. The hypothesis is when a church honors its traditions through the word of God in a diminishing community, the church and community will flourish and experience growth through God's agape love. A qualitative research methodology was used to obtain narrative stories of clergy from various denominations. Their common shared experience will develop a strategic plan to help churches effectively connect with communities.

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I first acknowledge, thank and give all honor and praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who provided everything I needed by fulfilling all His promises during this doctoral journey.

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I am especially appreciative to my mentors Dr. G. Martin Young and Dr. Alfred Thompson, as well as Dr. Carlos Taylor and Dr. Harold Hudson for the guidance, support, feedback, encouragement, inspiration, empowerment and instruction they all gave over the course of this Doctor of Ministry program. Thank you for your understanding, grace, concern and friendship.

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In addition, I want to acknowledge and thank my peers of the Growing the Church without Walls; Effective Preaching and Stewardship in the 21st Century group

for their camaraderie, support and encouragement during the course of this doctoral program.

Furthermore, and lastly, I extend my thanks to Deacon Daniel Grant, my contextual peers and the Mount Olive Baptist Church of Rectortown, for blessing me with the tremendous experience of growing in grace through the involvement of this project. To God be the glory.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Craddock legacy. I am honored to have discovered through this project that tradition runs deep and is reverenced in the DNA of the Craddock family. I honor my deceased father, John Willis Craddock, deceased brothers, John Constine Craddock and Raymond Curtis Craddock, deceased father-in-law, Curtis May, and my only living uncle, Joe Williams, with this project on tradition. I am grateful for all the things you have taught me, and I am honored to pass on those stalwart Godly qualities to my son and other men in whom I am privileged to influence.

I also honor the strong women in my life that have deposited leaves of gold on me. I honor my deceased mother-in-law, Gladys May, deceased grandmothers, Nellie Wilborn and Corean Craddock, deceased aunt, Dorothy Upshur, and my loving mother Hazel Mabell Craddock. I am grateful for the examples you displayed as confident godly submissive women and the wonderful timeless recipes you passed on to me knowing my love for cooking. I am honored that my family have adopted the spirit of traditions that hold our family close.

I also dedicate this work to my wife and soulmate in life, Stephanie May Craddock. Our family is stronger because of Stephanie's love for God, love for me, support for the family, and understanding when traditions are still useful and when it is time to let them go. Stephanie, your enduring support has provided me with constant leaning posts. Thanks for loving me and propping me up when I am tired. I love you!

Lastly, this work is dedicated to the newest member of the Craddock family my granddaughter Natalie Grace Craddock, who is one year old. My prayer is that Natalie will be raised to honor tradition through the word of God, and recognize and keep those traditions that are healthy, preserve and strengthen the family. To God be the glory.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1	Research questions.....	175
2	Narrative research design.....	175
3	Narrative research analysis.....	176
4	Triangulation	178
5	Strategic pillars connecting the church and community	179
6	Structure	180
7	Simple leadership flow chart.....	181
8	Suitable employment	182
9	Supportive teamwork.....	183
10	Service community	184

INTRODUCTION

Church membership across America in both rural and urban areas is dropping rapidly and research shows that tradition is one of the causes of that decline. Eighty percent of the churches in America are not growing, and approximately eight churches a day close its doors. Congregations are shrinking by about one million members annually. A decline in members means fewer souls saved and less income for churches, further ensuring their decline. Because there is evidence that shows tradition has played some part in the falling-off of membership in the church the question arises: should the church kill out-of-date traditions before those traditions kill the church?

In the Orthodox Christian tradition-driven church the favorite phrase is “We’ve always done it this way.”¹ Meeting the challenge of adapting to a changing culture has proved difficult for the church. Businesses have become culturally sensitive and have adjusted to meet the needs of a changing community, however many churches in the community have remained the same being, stagnant in their traditions.²

This describes the problem at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Rectortown, Virginia which is a church honoring tradition through the Word of God in a diminishing community. It is a church that has kept the practice of its traditions but has lost its

¹ R. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 77.

² E. H. Hammett, and J. R. Pierce, *Reaching People Under Forty While Keeping People Over Sixty* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2007), 3.

purpose in the community. As the community changed and people transitioned in and out of it, the church remained the same. Without a paradigm shift, within the next decade the membership will not be able to sustain the church because as parishioners pass on, there is no one to fill their empty seat in the sanctuary pews.

This research explores a qualitative narrative design that will capture the testimonies of various clergy from different denominations with the goal of identifying a convergent point of a common shared experience. There are no cookie-cutter solutions for reversing a church in decline. Churches have unique characteristics because they have different people. Different reasons cause decline. It could be anything from poor leadership to being locked into the traditions of the past or simply a change in population in the community.³ There is one thing that is certain—a paradigm shift is needed.

The following pages of this document are comprised of critical foundation literature made from articles, books, and journals written by scholars and expert authorities in their respective fields of study. The topic of tradition is explored in relation to the population decline in the church and is conveyed in the foundational writings. The ministry focus, biblical, historical, theological and theoretical literary exploration will assist in the convergence of research findings as it relates to tradition and the church.

Chapter one of this document provides the ministry focus and synergizes my history, ministry proficiencies, and interest with the context and explores how they converge and work together to find a solution to the problem. This chapter also analyzes what is functioning and what is malfunctioning in the context. Both I and the context are

³ Exponential, “Suggestion on What to Do When the Church is in Decline,” accessed January 14, 2018, <https://exponential.org/suggestions-on-what-to-do-when-the-church-is-in-decline/>.

exposed and made vulnerable which enables a clean start and ultimately conclude with an outcome that is honest and true resulting in the formation of a hypothesis.

Chapter two of this document explores the biblical explanations in (Exodus 15:22 – 16:3) Old Testament, and (John 4:1-34) New Testament Scriptures. Both pericopes are rich narratives concerning tradition. In the Old Testament, the consequences of looking back are noted when dwelling on the past consumes someone more than looking towards the future. After God delivers the Israelites out of the hand of Pharaoh, they began to complain in the wilderness about what they used to have. Their looking back on the past delayed their claiming their promise land future. In the New Testament narrative of the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus shows that changing the normal route of travel can provide opportunities for new engagement with a community that can present new beginnings.

Chapter three of this document explores the historical prospective and focus of this project. This section elaborates on how change can be intimidating, but it is inevitable. An organism that is not changing is dying. This chapter illuminates how the sixteenth century Catholic Church resisted changing its practice of indulgences and violently rejected Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* because it implied corruption and was a direct threat to papal dignity and authority. This chapter shows how an institution set and embedded in comfortable traditions can be unwilling to relinquish forms of orthodoxy because of the fear of change.

Chapter four of this document explores the theological perspective and focus of this project. An underlying tone of liberation theology permeates throughout this chapter. In the Old Testament, God liberated His people after 430 years of Egyptian bondage.

This chapter reinforces the same tone in the New Testament in how Jesus liberates the Samaritan woman at the well with the Living Water. It does not stop there, she goes on to share her experience with her community; and they are also liberated. It is imperative for the church to remain healthy and connected to the community as the tone of liberation theology is made available through the church.

Chapter five explores the theoretical perspective and focus of the project. This chapter addresses a broad spectrum of ministries and demographics concerning social and psychological theories on tradition in the church. The chapter goes on to discuss the fact that as the world evolves and systems adjust to meet the needs of changing communities, the church must also make considerations to remain relevant in society. If not, it will become insignificant in the community it is in.

The sixth chapter points to the implementation and project analysis of the research methodology to assess its effectiveness. The outcome of the qualitative narrative research information is compiled, analyzed and discussed among the focus groups to identify fragments of commonality to support some level of treatment implemented within the context of ministry. Additionally, the project summary of learning is located within this area of the document.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter (2 Thess. 2:15). In this letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul and his delegation are addressing tradition. He is not addressing the ancestral tradition of Israel, rather he is communicating to the Thessalonian church to stand firm in the traditions of what they had been taught about the second coming of Christ and the deception of the evil one (Satan).

It is not uncommon for people or institutions to misinterpret the true intent of a statement, an idea, a concept, a process, a report or an utterance and take it out of context. At first glance, someone might think the scripture in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 is speaking about traditions, customs and historical matters. However, it is clear when reading the total pericope, Paul is sharing his concerns of being deceived and maintaining an alert spirit, by keeping a watchful eye and staying focused on everything he taught the church. It does not take much effort to prevaricate the truth if a message is not focused, clear, and strongly articulated. Paul is teaching with a wearying effect so that an informal fallacy or false attribution of his message will not be distorted, and the church will receive an unintended meaning of his message. In Paul's letter to Thessalonica, he was reiterating his concerns in a letter that would give little or no opportunity to create controversy, conflict, chaos, or misunderstanding. This synergy assignment comes at a time in my

ministry context that affords me the opportunity to address the serious issues that are causing perils on the rural church where I am privileged to serve as pastor. Within the forthcoming pages, my ministry interests and skills will be highlighted, along with my life history, in relation to the needs of that context. This assignment will expose the problem within my context and will provide me with a basis to form a hypothesis statement for the Doctor of Ministry project.

I was born in Detroit, Michigan on November 17, 1962 to John Willis and Hazel Mabell Craddock. I was born pre-mature by two months. Because I was a seven-month term baby, I could not go home with my mother after birth. I weighed only three and a half ounces at birth, and Harper Grace Hospital in Detroit had to keep me in an incubator for two months until I reached five pounds in weight.

I am the youngest of three sons with one younger sister; we were very close in age and very much attached and bonded to each other. Raymond (now deceased) was my oldest brother and three years older than I. My brother Billy (now deceased) was fourteen months older than I. Karla, my younger sister, is three years younger than I. My mom and dad became surrogate foster parents in 1978 to a little four-year-old girl. They loved Rashell so much that she became a part of our family permanently through adoption.

My parents were very giving people and very much family-focused. My dad loved his older brother, Thomas, and his wife, Cherry. Aunt Cherry was infertile, barren, and could not have children. They had been attempting to have children for years with no success. My mom and dad agreed to send me down south to Eufaula, Alabama to live with my grandparents, John and Coreen Craddock, until I was four years old. On the

weekends I would stay with my aunt and uncle and with my grandparents during the week. My mom shared with me that I was named Tony because that name very closely resembles the name Thomas, and my uncle had a great deal of influence in naming me.

I have many vivid and special memories of living with my grandparents that I believe were anchors in forming and framing my life. I remember hanging onto my grandma's dress as she went about her daily activities, from shopping at the local A & P grocery store to stopping by the church for noonday prayer time. I remember Grandma cooking and baking and taking the food from house to house but not receiving any money for it. She was serving people not for financial gain but for Christian joy. I would stand on a kitchen stool, peeping over the edge of the table, waiting with great anticipation to lick the bowl and the cake beaters. She always made sure there was extra in the bowl for me. I remember waking early in the morning, walking into the kitchen, standing on that same stool, watching my grandfather with his legs crossed reading the newspaper and drinking hot tea. He would dip the tea bag into the cup until the water in the cup turned dark. The more he dipped the tea bag, the darker the water became. He knew I wanted to taste it, but he also knew that it was too hot for me to drink, so he would pour hot water into the cup until the tea began to overflow into the saucer. He then would carefully slide the saucer over to the edge of the table and allow me to drink from the saucer because the tea that overflowed into the saucer was cooler than the tea inside the cup. As I reminisce about this time, I am reminded of one of my favorite scriptures in Psalms chapter twenty-three and how the Psalmist reflects on an overflowing cup.

There is one last memory of Eufaula that frightened me so bad, my parents had to come and get me the very next week. I remember my grandpa making homemade ice

cream on Sunday evening, and the family sat on the front porch eating my grandma's pound cake along with the ice cream. I went to bed without going to the outhouse and was awakened very early because I had to use the bathroom. I noticed my grandfather was not in the bed. There was only one light on the telephone pole outside to illuminate the yard. The light was located by the chicken shed. As I was walking outside I noticed a shadow moving very quickly to and fro within the chicken shed. A chicken was running from the shadow. I then realized the shadow was my grandfather, and he was chasing the chicken. I saw him grab the chicken by the neck and twist over and around, again and again, until he broke the neck of the chicken. He then violently ran over to the chicken and chopped off its head with an axe. I thought it was a nightmare until morning came when I went into the kitchen to greet my grandma. I asked where Grandpa was and she said he was outside raking the chicken shed. As soon as she said those words, I saw chicken feet stand straight up in the pot on the stove and I began to scream. The man that I loved to be with and ride the knee of could no longer hold me, and I did not want to eat my grandma's great cooking any longer. My parents had to come and get me because I was not eating.

As I pieced together my past, it became clear to me how my earlier life experiences set the stage for my life in this present time. I can see how the rich upbringing of the South is engraved in me through my earliest memories with my grandparents. I can see how watching my grandmother cook, bake, and serve people has influenced my career path. Lastly, I can see how being raised in Alabama has drawn me to appreciate good country living, hospitality, and rural customs and traditions.

Serving as the Senior Pastor of the Mount Olive Baptist Church of Rectortown, Virginia and the seventh pastor of the historic 149-year-old institution is a great honor and I stand privileged to have been called for the assignment that is before me. The mission statement for the church is “To Equip and Connect the Generations for Service in Christ, Church, and Community.” The membership at Mount Olive is approximately 160 parishioners presently on the church roll; however, at any given Sunday service, seventy to one hundred parishioners will occupy the pews. Mount Olive is the largest church edifice in the county with the seating capacity of over 250 in the main sanctuary and over 200 occupancy loads in fellowship hall. The parishioners assemble every Sunday for church school at 9:30 a.m. and Morning Worship Service at 11:00 a.m. We also are a church at Prayer and Bible study on Thursday evenings from 7:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Mount Olive’s membership is comprised mostly of elderly or seasoned Golden Saints. The average age of the church goers is sixty-six years of age. A minimal number of children, youth, teenage and young adults are engaged and represented in the church.

Nearly two-thirds of my ministry experience has encompassed evangelizing children and youth. At one point in my ministry odyssey it did not seem reasonable and fair for me because my ministry was not advancing, and it felt as though youth ministry had me trapped in its web. My biggest fear was that my ministry legacy would be known as the oldest youth ministry pastor on the East coast. Looking back on the path traveled concerning ministry, God has been strategic and merciful in guiding and grooming me for my current assignment. Without question, all of the skills, knowledge and experiences gained in my years of youth ministry were to prepare and equip me to function

successfully in my present ministry context as Senior Pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Fauquier County.

Positioning the church in the larger geographic location of Fauquier County and not Rectortown is intentional because the issues and concerns of the ministry context at Mount Olive are visible and alive at nearly every church in the area. A quick glance at the rich and vibrant culture of the rolling hills and fertile valleys of Fauquier County is an opportunity to examine the ministry contextual structure that God has placed me in to serve as pastor of the Mount Olive Baptist Church. The memory still is very vivid in my mind the day that the Chair of the Deacon Ministry gave me a call informing me of the decision the church made to elect me as their pastor. That evening, the Holy Spirit prompted me to drive more than one hour to the grounds of the church parking lot to sit and say a prayer of thanks for the journey traveled and the journey that was before me.

On the drive to the church, my wife and I were taken back and in awe of the beauty of the winding roads and the scenic views of the mountains, green pastures and farmland. It was so serene and peaceful. The one thing that stuck out to the both of us was that every church we passed in route to Rectortown looked the same. They were similar in architectural appearance, shape and similar in size. It was if the same builder constructed the churches in Fauquier County and erected them around the same timeframe. However, the appearance of Mount Olive changed and it no longer looked like the other twenty-five churches that comprise the Fauquier County and Vicinity Ministers Coalition (FCVMC). Over the years Mount Olive has gone through minor and major structural building changes which made it one of the largest worship edifice structures in Fauquier County.

In 1867, just down the road from where the present church stands, a Prayer Band began the construction of the first church which they occupied for approximately three years before it was destroyed by fire. The people were determined to have a place to worship and were motivated in 1871 to rebuild a new edifice on the same site. Later the Mount Olive Church relocated approximately one-half mile west to its present site. The cornerstone was laid on September 17, 1911. The last renovation was in 2002 which allowed Mount Olive to remain the forward leading church, afforded the church an educational wing for the community and other churches to grow closer through fellowship and advance in their training and biblical instruction.

Yes, the churches in the area not only looked alike, they were like minded in their actions and behavior as well. One of the possible reasons could be that the churches are considered “family churches” and the people are related and intertwined. My family had to learn quickly who to talk to and who not to talk to because everyone was “kinfolk.” So, when addressing the concerns of the ministry context at Mount Olive, it is impossible to leave out all the other neighboring churches because they are like clones of each other from the outside in.

A memory of the first meeting with the former pastor, now emeritus, is one that is etched in my mind, and throughout my tenure as pastor was brought up in meetings with the leadership of the church. An afternoon luncheon was arranged at a local restaurant and as we broke bread together we did not exchange a great deal of information. In looking back on that meeting, it was intentional that the pastor emeritus wanted me to know only one thing. He stated that “Mount Olive has always been, and must continue to be the front running or forward leading church.” In essence, he was conveying to me that

the church that elected me as pastor must set the tone and provide the blueprint for all the other churches in the coalition. He was saying, what we do, they will do, and where we go, they will follow!

Having no idea about the complexity of issues facing my current ministry context at Mount Olive until getting involved with the program at United Theological Seminary, it has been an eye-opening experience. Writing my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis papers revealed answers to so many of my questions that were troubling me concerning my ministry path. Trusting in God through this entire process has revealed and confirmed that the place God has landed me in ministry is exactly where He wants me to be, and that He has been preparing me for the mission and assignment of pastoring the Mount Olive Baptist Church of Rectortown, Virginia.

Upon arriving at Mount Olive during my trial period in the midst of the pastoral search, it was very noticeable there was an absence of youth and children in the congregation. While getting a chance to meet the entire church during a question and answer session, it was noted that when the teenage church members graduated from high school and matriculated to college, they did not return to the Marshall or Rectortown area after graduation. The local industry consisting of raising horses, cattle, and farming, was not and still is not much to attract or offer a younger population. When graduating from college they would relocate northeast of Fauquier to northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. where jobs were plentiful and salaries were 25% above the national average.¹

¹ “Popular Job Titles,” Indeed, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.indeed.com/salary/Washington-DC.html>.

Among the contextual ministry issues that are of great concern to Mount Olive are deteriorating youth attendance and participation in the worship service, a people resistant to change, lack of community involvement, deeply rooted and outdated traditions and absence of mentoring and stagnant ministry growth. These issues can be found at any church, but they are so imbedded and ingrained in the fiber of Mount Olive that if they are not addressed immediately, the church will be annihilated within the next decade.

What are the ways my ministry experience can contribute to the ministry at Mount Olive moving forward in relation to the contextual challenges? In order to talk about moving forward in my present context, we must revisit my past context. As an associate minister attending the Friendship Baptist Church in Southwest Washington, D.C. in 1984, it was hard not to fall in love with the ministry there and the senior pastor. He was a big man standing six-feet five inches tall, he had big hands and had a big heart. He taught me how to work side by side with senior pastors and how to keep a heart of humility while being privileged of being mentored by them. He taught me how to answer people with gentleness and grace. He appointed me as youth minister to teach and nurture the children, youth and college age parishioners. When he became ill, he loved me enough to see my passion for ministry and that my growth at Friendship had been exhausted. To further my development and skillset in ministry before he passed and went to glory, he introduced me to his good friend across the Potomac River at the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia.

I met the senior pastor there who was a man small in stature but not in content. He was a giant in ministry and was a professor at the Washington Baptist Seminary, teaching homiletics. He was heavily vested in the Baptist General Convention of Virginia (BGC),

and he wanted me to engage learning about the Eagle Eyrie Youth Evangelism Program, taking place annually in Lynchburg, Virginia. Eagle Eyrie is a ministry where thousands of teenaged youth assembled and praised God on the mountain top in their own way with no restrictions. My becoming one of the front-line soldiers for then Director and Assistant Director of Youth and Evangelism allowed my passion for youth ministry to grow even more. This experience positioned me at the table assisting in logistics and planning for the most exciting youth retreat on the east coast ministering to over 10,000 youth annually.

Mastering relations with the youth in church and the community was just one of my responsibilities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sought me out to become the Youth and College Director for their organization in Arlington County. The exposure in the community gave me the opportunity to also be a board member of the Arlington County Parent Education School Board. As youth minister and community activist, the community looked forward to the annual basketball camp the church allowed me to organize at the local Carver Community Center in Arlington. The camp partnered with professional sports teams to mentor the community, church youth, and local gang members while they were being ministered to and educated in areas of good sportsmanship on and off the basketball court, financial management, the importance of voting, and being responsible citizens.

My odyssey guided me to my present pastor at the First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, Virginia. His ministry has taken him outside of the walls of the church as a local Delegate in the Commonwealth of Virginia. He represents the epitome of how ministry and politics can be gracefully managed and merged to extend God's love

to saints inside the walls of the church and to the community and the unchurched beyond the walls of the sanctuary. The pastor and the First Mount Zion ministry afforded me the opportunity to assist the church in developing a food service ministry at the 4000-member church.

As a retired Marine, because of my military experience and knowledge in food service as a certified chef, combined with a keen focus on outreach ministry, I was equipped and ready for the opportunity to develop the Grain of Heaven food service ministry. The Director of Food Services position was offered to me to develop the food ministry and I gladly accepted the position because I knew this was where I was supposed to be at this time in my ministry. My responsibilities were to start-up a restaurant inside the church, purchase equipment, write policy guidelines, and help design the facility. The director was also to hire, train, and educate the staff and volunteers to help run the facility. The food ministry supported the daily feeding of twenty-five staff members, over 100 pre-school students, and senior daycare feeding. The food ministry also catered to the entire church family for Sunday breakfast, lunch, repass, weddings, anniversaries and other special events. One of the key elements of the food ministry was the emergency relief response partnership with the Red Cross. This element was designed for immediate support to the local community in the event of a natural disaster until the Federal Government was able to arrive with support. After the facility followed local and state regulations, the successful opening of the dining facility was achieved and the Grain was open for business. My assignment was complete and my resignation from the director's position was submitted.

In my present ministry context, my assurance without any reservation is that God has equipped me for the challenges that Mount Olive of Rectortown is facing. As mentioned earlier, the average age of the parishioner at Mount Olive is sixty-six years of age. The experiences afforded to me in youth and children's ministry give me insight to many of the issues the church is facing. A large percentage of the issues in the church can be dealt with from the aspect of the youth in mind. If the issues of the youth are addressed, parents win. If the issues of the youth are addressed grandparents win. If the issues of the youth are addressed the friends of the youth win. All the problems the church is dealing with like traditions, outreach, mentoring, tithing, praise and worship, can be addressed by focusing on the youth. There is something special and spiritual in dealing with the youth when it concerns the church. Jesus gave the church hints concerning the salvation experience and how we should treat the young. Jesus said to "suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).

Traditionally churches have not supported youth ministries with budgets that facilitate, promote and encourage growth. My experience is that there is financial disparity when dealing with budgets and youth in the church. This was the case at the churches throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia when the Baptist General Convention (BGC) partnered with many of the churches with fundraising because budgets were not in place to finance the cost of the retreat for their youth. Wayne Price in his book *The Church and the Rites of Passage* says, "Most churches tend to direct their resources to youth programs – junior and senior high school age. While those programs and the attention are vital, he wishes the churches would direct equal energy toward

young adults from the time they graduate from high school until they settle into full adulthood. These years are almost unrecognized for their need and the intensity of their struggle because these young adults have become so sophisticated in hiding their inner tensions.”² Being a soldier on the front lines of youth ministry it was clear that, if something was not done differently by churches concerning the financial and ministry support they provided to their youth and children, there would be a series crisis and the church would become unhealthy for all age groups in the church, not just the youth and children.

As youth minister, my key focus was to think outside the box by placing some of the traditions of the local church on call by challenging some of them. Our youth ministry at Mount Olive challenged the church to let the young people serve in positions of leadership. They challenged the church to let them have their own Sunday for worship and to bring in their own speakers. They challenged the church to be open on Saturday night for “Saturday Night Live Worship Service,” and the church began to grow. We were able to convince the church that in today’s world coming inside of the church walls to experience God has been challenged. With reality television, cable, radio, social media, online streaming of worship services, and online giving, our youth are experiencing God from their cell phones, computers and family room entertainment centers.

Jeremy Zach, an energetic, exciting and innovative youth minister, in an article highlighting his book *Youth Ministry* (Test Pilot) says 50-60% of kids are dropping out of their faith after high school and that youth ministries are only reaching 25-30% of the

² Wayne Price, *The Church and the Rites of Passage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1989), 53.

kids in the community.³ He supports leaving the walls of the church and our youth rooms to go meet and befriend more kids in the community.⁴ It is clear that cities across the country are becoming more and more unchurched which means that there is going to be an insane urgency to reach unchurched students and families. This is not a picture exclusive to the urban church. The rural church is in worse shape because of stagnant demographics and industries. The statement from Jeremy Zach caught my attention because it relates to my cohort focus group at United Theological Seminary. Ministry Beyond the Walls Through Prophetic Preaching addresses the core issues of the problem at Mount Olive and focusses on many of the things Jeremy talks about. Jeremy articulates that church ministries must become broader and define new boundaries of operation for reaching a lost world. We are losing generations of people for various reasons, and we may need to re-think our ministry procedures and perhaps operate outside of our comfort zones to win the world over.

Since Mount Olive's conception in 1867 in Rectortown, the congregation has invested heavily in customs and traditions. It is those things that make the church a special place; however, the church is set on keeping their customs and traditions by resisting the normal progression of change. It is the stagnation and comfort of complacency and resistance to doing anything different in the church that is preventing the church from experiencing any growth in membership or providing the opportunity for new ministries to emerge.

³ Jeremy Zach, "Is Your Student Ministry Ready for the Unchurched," Youth Ministry Test Pilot, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.youthministrytestpilot.com/category/student-ministry-skills/evangelism/>.

⁴ Zach, "Is Your Student Ministry Ready for the Unchurched," accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.youthministrytestpilot.com/category/student-ministry-skills/evangelism/>.

As the seventh pastor and successor to the previous leader that served the congregation of Mount Olive for over fifty years, it is an honor and privilege to shepherd and lead this historic institution with their traditions and customs as the church searches for its relevance in the crossroads of a community rich in history but dying in its traditions. Taking a few steps backward and looking at the church through a metaphoric wide-angle lens, the contextual problem facing Mount Olive is severe and grave. The issue of youth concerning the present context of the church is not to be taken lightly because it is very serious; however, on the other end of the spectrum are issues concerning the elderly of the church, their passing away in large numbers, and the church being deeply ingrained and rooted in its traditions.

Through watching and listening, a remarkable amount of information has been obtained to make assumptions of why things are the way they are. An attempt to point a finger, throw blame or hold someone accountable is not my goal, however there are some things that are inevitable and cannot be compromised or hidden. To address the issues that are pressing the church, the truth, integrity and lucidity must exist in dealing with this problem. My grandmother in Alabama would tell me as a little boy to stop covering the sore on my knee. It would not heal until it was exposed and open to the air. My assignment at Mount Olive is one that was given to me by God. That assignment is to expose the sore but to protect the wound from contamination so it can heal.

Tradition can become a good situation or a bad problem. Years ago, in the early 1980's, as my family was just getting started, we initiated a tradition that my family still cherishes today. On Christmas morning, the whole family would wake early and before we opened presents, we would squeeze fresh oranges for breakfast juice. It was so much

fun, yet so painful as our hands got tired; but we looked forward to squeezing the fresh juice that we would soon enjoy at the table. As the children grew up and moved out of the house we followed the tradition less and less. The kids are not practicing that tradition anymore because they discovered fresh squeezed orange juice can be purchased at the grocery store, and they could have the pleasure of enjoying the juice without the pain of squeezing the oranges. The goal for the family was not having fresh juice but having the family involved in an unselfish activity that would bring everyone together to enjoy each other.

In the case of my ministry context, tradition has served the church well throughout the years in making the church a stalwart and firm organism in the face of families, the community and the sister churches within the Fauquier County Coalition. However, because of shifting demographics, families have dissipated from the community and the neighboring churches are suffering from similar issues that their frontrunner Mount Olive of Rectortown is experiencing. In addressing the traditions that have served the church well in this family-oriented church in past years, many of those customs and behaviors have become outdated and are not relevant for the church today.

The youth ministry has been explored throughout these pages, but the chronicles and experiences from my military career and food service history brings a wealth of understanding to my present ministry context. It is with great pride, and it is with distinguished honor that twenty-one years of my life was rendered serving my country as a United States Marine. At the early age of sixteen, my enlistment into the Marines was a shock to everyone. My intention was to run from what God was calling me to do in

ministry and to escape from the Detroit culture. Unbeknownst to me, God was training me for the mission that was before me in my present context.

There are different attributes that separate and distinguished the military services from each other. When the military came to my high school on career day, it was the Marines that stood out among all the other branches of service. It was the way the Marine dress blue uniform fit, the way the Marines talked, the way they stood, and it was how the Marines shook my hand that made a lasting impression on me. When asking the Marine what made the difference for them in comparison to the services, he stood and said, "Everyone can't be a Marine; we only need a few." He went on to say, "our traditions, customs and our history separates us from all the rest."

Before a prospective Marine enlists into the Corps by swearing in, he or she cannot take the oath until he or she passes a history test highlighting the customs and traditions of the Marines and the war campaigns they have fought. They take pride in their history because they are the only branch of service that has never lost a battle. The Marine Corps mission has changed over the years, but what has remained constant since November 10, 1775 is the unyielding commitment to protecting the lives of the citizens and the interests, values and freedoms of the Nation. The Marines purpose, by congressional mandate, is to be the Nation's rapid response force, meaning when called upon to defend and protect the Nation's causes, the Marines are "most ready" than any other branch of service to deploy within twenty-four hours to fight, thus earning the title "The first to fight." From humanitarian relief efforts to combat operations, from air, land and sea to every climb and place, the Marine Corps is ready to answer the 911 call of the

United States 911. That type of respect can only come from having a rich, vibrant and distinguished history.⁵

Knowing the importance of a rich and significant history and how to honor and preserve it is dear to me. Knowing about the meaningful value of having a great legacy and how to keep that legacy from being forgotten is of the highest priority when it comes to maintaining an institution's integrity and reputation. Honor and commitment and staying faithful to the traditions and customs which allow one generation to pass the torch to another generation is something that is second nature to me. My life is familiar with living this scenario out from my earliest memories of living with my grandparents in Alabama throughout my career in the Marine Corps, proudly serving my country. Without a doubt, my appreciation and experience in dealing with the history and customs of the Corps can help my present ministry context.

Thomas Howard in his book *Evangelical is Not Enough* really breaks down the idea of “reuniting the physical and spiritual” and how traditions and custom have great value. “It is in the physical world that the intangible exists. A kiss seals a courtship. The sexual act seals a marriage. A ring betokens the marriage. A diploma crowns years of schooling. A doctoral robe bespeaks intellectual achievement. A uniform and stripes announce a recruit training. A crown girds the brow that rules England.”⁶ These symbolisms are examples of the importance of where we have come from, and where we are headed.⁷ Those who suppose the ceremonies are simply something extra, like frosting

⁵ United States Marine Corps, “At a Moment’s Notice,” accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.marines.com/what-we-do/rapid-response>.

⁶ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1984), 36, 98.

⁷ Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough*, 36, 98.

on a cake that has little to do with the substance of the cake. Perhaps one should ponder the odd fact that every time history, customs, or a ceremony is recognized, is all this stuff necessary; or are we doing this so that we will not escape the stark reality of the significant nature and hollow essence of the event.

As a Marine serving seventeen of my twenty-one years of service at the oldest post in the Marine Corps, located in the Nation's Capital in Southeast Washington, D.C., my career has been an extraordinary one. Marines Barracks Eighth and I Street, Southeast is the home of the Commandant of the Marines and the Presidential Honor Guard. As the Enlisted Aide to four Commandants, my duties were protocol liaison aide and chief curator for the historical living quarters. The Commandants quarters is the oldest continuous occupied residence in the Nation's Capital. Established in 1801, the Marine Barracks is a National Historic Landmark and the official residence of the Commandant of the Marine Corps since 1806, and main ceremonial grounds of the Marine Corps.⁸

There is no better symbol for the purpose of Marines serving than the emblem. Every Marine appreciates the symbol that represents their Corps. The eagle, globe, and anchor are everything the Marine Corps symbolizes. The eagle represents the proud nation we defend. It stands at the ready position with our coastlines in sight and the entire world within reach of its outstretched wings. The globe represents the Corps' worldwide presence. The anchor points both to the Marine Corps' naval heritage and its ability to perform amphibious landings, accessing any coastline in the world. Together, the eagle,

⁸ United States Marine Corps, *Home of the Commandants* (Quantico, VA: CADMUS Publishing Group, 1995), x.

globe and anchor symbolize our commitment to defend our nation—in the air, on land and at sea.⁹

Spending one-third of my life in the Marines, serving my country and honoring its history and customs have allowed my life to be fulfilled in such a way that God has been honored through my dedication, understanding and appreciation of the Corps' heritage and legacy. When history and customs are acknowledged, honor is understood; and healthy and vibrant atmospheres can exist because of the truth being upheld which solidifies the scripture “you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

The equipping for my present context is broad when exploring my knowledge and experience in culinary arts. As a General's Aide and steward, one of my biggest responsibilities was to entertain for official functions. Training at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, New York and the Johnson and Wales University at Providence, Rhode Island was probably the biggest highlights of my military career. The skills obtained while training there taught me how to satisfy almost anyone's palate. The skills learned positioned me to cook for large Marines regiments beyond 5000 troops, and prepare small quantities of cuisine for elegant fine dining for as little as two persons. No job was too large or small, from cooking for prisoners in correctional institutions to cooking for the President of the United States and heads of states.

Believing God has strategically prepared me for the task of transitioning a church and community in crisis, Mount Olive reached out to the local Claude Thompson Elementary School, the largest gathering place in Rectortown besides the fellowship hall

⁹ Conservapedia, “United States Marine Corps,” accessed February 17, 2016, http://www.conservapedia.com/United_States_Marine_Corps.

at the church. In past years, the church facility was designated as a local precinct for voting. Currently, the church is attempting to partner with the Claude Thompson School, the Marshall Fire and Rescue Squad and the local State and County Police to develop an emergency relief and evacuation plan for the students in the school and the surrounding community. The recent purchase of a generator to ensure at least half the church has electrical power was a milestone achievement for both the congregation and the community. Prior to the church reaching out to the local authorities, there was no plan in place for the children, teachers, and community residents to rendezvous for temporary shelter if the Rectortown area was met with small or large catastrophic challenges. My past experience in developing a disaster relief plan for a mega-church gives me the advantage of having the knowledge to bring community and church together.

It is evident in my present context and personal ministerial development, there are clear connections to accentuate and converge on a proposed project that will formulate a topic for my hypothesis statement. What constantly comes to mind and what never fails to be the assumption of every church visited and every clergyman in the Northern Virginia vicinity is, when invited to preach at an annual day, homecoming, or anniversary service, it is a guarantee the other preachers would say to me, “so you’re the young man that replaced the Dean of Northern Virginia; you’ve got some big shoes to fill.” My comeback statement has always been to tell them that no one can fill the Dean’s shoes; however, my commitment was to become the heel plate for those shoes. The heel plate protects the heel, preserves it, and keeps it from wearing down. It is a fact that once the heel begins to wear down, the shoe is in danger of being damaged and destroyed. It can

also cause damage to someone's stride or gait. A part of my contextual problem is preserving the heel or history of Mount Olive.

Can you imagine the heel of the United States of America being worn down? It is unimaginable! Preserving an institutions history is vital to its survival. Our understanding of history shapes the way we view the present, and therefore it dictates what answers can be offered for existing problems and future problems.¹⁰ When we go into a doctor's office for the first time, we invariably have to fill out an information sheet that asks about our medical history. This is what the doctor will use to guide medical treatment because our history is a snapshot of who we are. History offers a storeroom of data about how people and cultures behave. Studying the stories and testimonies of individuals and situations and how they have weathered adversity can be a beautiful thing. Even if that history does not depict a positive and constructive portrait, a wealth of information that gives knowledge can be gleaned from one's history.

Preserving the heel means to honor the church and the road it has traveled throughout the years gracefully. It may be a reality that many of the customs and tradition are outdated and are not relevant for the church in today's culture, but that does not mean what has made the church who and what it is must be forgotten. What exactly do I mean, and can examples be given? One example is a church spiritual anthem. There is nothing more reassuring that true worship is happening, than when we sing together, *How Great Thou Art or Amazing Grace*.¹¹ However, to sing these anthems through the entire worship

¹⁰ M. McGoldrick and R. Gerson, "Perspectives on the Intergenerational Family," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (Summer 1986): 165.

¹¹ National Baptist Publishing Board, *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Triad Publications, 1977), 25, 132.

service can kill the service because these are songs of worship and not songs of praise. There must be a conscious balance of worship and praise in the service. In Frank Thomas' book *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God*, a story is illustrated about the significant nature of a classical hymn. Pastor Andre' Trocme' of the village Le Chambon, worked to save the lives of Jews from the onslaught of Hitler during the German occupation of France. A vicious crackdown was ordered on those who were aiding the Jews. The pastor was arrested and taken from his home and paraded through the streets. There were bystanders lining the streets as the police passed with the pastor. The bystanders sang a Lutheran hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The people sang this hymn in spite of facing the reality they might ever see their pastor again. Yes, hymns are a valuable part of the history of the church.¹²

The spiritual turbulence that Mount Olive is experiencing will encompass a paradigm shift not only in praise and worship but in how the church is equipped to do God's will. The rural country church, in years past, have thrived off of "Highway and Fire and Brimstone Preaching." Parishioners are still shouting but now are asking questions "why are we shouting?" In churches across the United States, the congregations not only want to hear the Word, they want to study the Word.

In Lora-Ellen McKinney's book *Christian Education in the African American Church*, she explained that equipping the saints does not just happen with the preaching of the Gospel. A broad range of church activities together comprises of the worship

¹² Frank Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 101.

experience. Prayer meetings, personal spiritual reflection and Christian education is playing a crucial role in the anatomy of the church.¹³

So many people who are afraid of losing their history that they are not willing to let go of the past. Exploring the past history of the church, the community and its people will provide content, purpose and a possible solution to my ministry contextual problem and will identify the topic that will be explored through my Doctor of Ministry project. An overview of the research problem may be broad in context and scope, but if narrowed down in focus can be articulated as a dying church trapped in tradition.¹⁴

The general nature and content of the proposed project is complexed but yet simple. The church that called me to serve in ministry as the Senior Pastor is in grave danger of being non-existent in just a few years if great measures are not taken to reverse the stigma of tradition. Since Mount Olive's influence among the other churches in its proximity is prevalent, the concern for these churches is equally important because they are carbon copies of Mount Olive.

Dr. G. Martin Young, in his book *Insanity of Theology*, writes about spiritual turbulence and how it will bring a life-altering transformation. Mount Olive is experiencing spiritual turbulence and the church is hanging on to life the only way it knows how. Anything other than traditional worship, praise, and giving is foreign to them. However, the spiritual turbulence is marked by radical change.¹⁵

¹³ Lora-Ellen McKinney, *Christian Education in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 15.

¹⁴ Rudestam Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015), 69.

¹⁵ Gerald Young, *Insanity of Theology* (Chicago, IL: MMGI Books, 2014), 118.

The forces of fear of change is ever before the church; and it is as though there is a restless, hopeless, wandering attitude of defeat that sparked inside of the church that over powers any possibility of wanting to survive. Even as this chapter is being written, there is spiritual turbulence attempting to take the church on a dive through the clouds of despair so that it will crash or even causing the ship to meet rough waters so it may capsize and not make its mission. This is all because of the fear of changing directions, avoiding the rough air or raging seas to plot a new course allowing the church to reach the same destination.

God has positioned me for such as a time as this to guide Mount Olive through the spiritual turbulence facing the church. A successful voyage through rough skies or waters now present will bring a more vibrant, richer, prosperous church, full of joy, peace and love. The wholeness needed to bring Mount Olive back into a position of leadership among the churches they once influenced is within the reach of the shore.

In bringing together the contents of this chapter into a statement for my “Ministry Focus,” it is my intent pull together my past, practices, professions, pastoral experience, and purpose to examine and summarize the hypothesis statement that will develop and guide this Doctoral Ministry Project theme which is “A Church Honoring Tradition through the Word of God in a Diminishing Community.”

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

During a Thursday evening planning meeting for the youth ministry counsel at my former church, several of the youth officers, parent leaders and I as the youth pastor, met to carve out the agenda for an upcoming 2004 annual youth retreat. A timely discussion began concerning goals, objectives and the expected outcome of the retreat. As the discussion progressed, it became apparent some of the parents were planning the retreat as if it was their retreat. They became adamant concerning every element of the agenda, from the entertainment, to the food and snacks, to the recess time. While some parents attempted to live out their unrealized vision of a youth retreat, others were intentional about planning an event which would bridge the generational gap between adults and youth. As a result of the brainstorming and planning, the youth retreat planning was beginning to take form and the key focus was to provide an opportunity that would connect and bring generations together through a youth worship experience.

The type of worship music was a big discussion issue and the parents were pushing for hymns and anthems. The songs which shaped their Christian experience and the experience of their parents were from the National Baptist Convention Hymnal. The youth wanted to experience a contemporary praise and worship style from artists like Kirk Franklin and Fred Hammond. After much dialogue, we achieved a program which would incorporate and celebrate both genres of music. A 1974 recording of Cool and the

Gangs “Summer Madness” (a secular song loved very much by an older generation in their youthful days) was reproduced in 1991 by actors and recording artists Will Smith and Jazzy Jeff to the delight of the youth and children. The youth had no idea this song was a remake from nearly twenty years earlier. This was something both generations could relate to because the youth were not familiar with the hymns and church music their parents were raised to love. The parents could not relate to the Christian music produced by new age artists. The minister of music was convinced to find remakes of the traditional worship music genre that had a contemporary beat. We were able to show that the old music had become new music to touch and influence a new generation of worshippers. The writer of Ecclesiastes writes, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time” (1: 9 – 10).

The experience of balancing the needs of older adults who were raised in a different era with making church appeal to a younger audience would be preparation for the role as senior pastor. The rural church is steeped in tradition and grounded in music and worship which defines what it means to have a relationship with God. In many cases, it is heretic to bring the “devil’s music” into the house of God. Praise dancing and mime ministries question the authenticity of a relationship with God. The rural church community feels it is necessary to hold on to their past experiences tightly. They are not willing to allow anything new, any alternative or different worship experiences, or any modern administration processes to exist in the church as they know it. If what is being proposed to the church is not familiar to the people, they will have nothing to do with it.

Tradition in the church at large today goes deeper and more intricate than one can imagine even when it comes to the Bible. Dr. Richard Flanders states, “his church has decided to stick to the old ‘King James Version’ of the Bible. The multiplication of ‘modern language’ English Bibles is one of the most important religious phenomena of recent years. It is our view that the production of these new translations has served to undermine the spiritual foundations of our country and weaken the message of her churches.”¹

There are some Christians that hate the title Old Testament almost as much as Jews do, according to author Steven Miller.² Instead of the Old Testament, they prefer the First Testament. The Old Testament suggests something is “out of date;” yet, many of the New Testament favorite teachings come from the Old Testament. Traditions enable us to honor the past and celebrate the present while providing a legacy for the future. Not only are they a source of enjoyment; they serve as the glue that keeps families united from one generation to the next and across the miles that often separate us, both literally and figuratively.³

Recently, speaking to thousands from a sports stadium in Nairobi, U.S. President Barack Obama took the country to task over corruption and the oppression of women. “I don’t want everybody to get too sensitive,” Obama said. “But the fact is, too often here in Kenya, as is true in other places, corruption is tolerated because that’s how things have

¹ Richard Flanders, “Why We Use the King James Version of the Bible,” accessed December 20, 2016, <http://av1611.com/kjbp/articles/flanders-whykjv.html>.

² Stephen M. Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Pub., 2007), 1.

³ Laura Munts, “Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present and Building the Future with Traditions,” Huffington Post, accessed on December 20, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-munts/traditions_b_1559444.html.

always been done...Here in Kenya, it's time to change habits."⁴ There are some traditions that are simply no longer relevant to the cause and purpose for which they were intended and created and must be abandoned. This is true in many of our institutions including the church. As the pastor of a transitioning church, this is the predicament we find ourselves. At the core is the dilemma of merging generations in a traditional church. The immediate past pastor and wife, who served the church for over fifty years, are visible and active within the congregation. They maintain some degree of influence. Many in the congregation are faced with honoring his legacy while embracing the much younger and progressive pastor whom they have called. While it appears to be a division within the congregation, the majority of the congregation continues to side with the past. In doing so, they have not completely rejected the current pastor and the vision for the future.

In the pages to come, the goal is to write this chapter by conducting a close reading of the text. In addition, there will be a contextual, and detailed analysis of (Exodus 15:22 – 16:3) Old Testament, and (John 4:1-34) New Testament pericopes. Through this investigation, information will emerge that will provide material to contribute in addressing the current contextual problem of celebrating the traditions of the past without confining our existence to them. The growth of the church spiritually and numerically is connected to her ability to change. The admonishment is not change for change sake but change for progression and future generations. Each pericope will end with personal reflections of the material examined. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary of how information from this chapter will contribute to the final project. The central thesis of this project is to determine how traditions provide wonderful

⁴ Lily Kuo, "Obama Tells Kenya that Some Traditions are Bad Traditions," accessed December 20, 2016, <http://qz.com/464182/obama-tells-kenya-that-some-traditions-are-bad-traditions/>.

opportunities to honor the past. The caution is, if not managed properly, traditions can hinder a church from growing and producing fruit.

Old Testament

The passage of scripture chosen to support this final Doctoral Project and to analyze for the purpose of this chapter is found in the Old Testament book of Exodus 15:22 - Exodus 16:3. The pericope reads from the New King James Version like this:

Then Moses led Israel on from the Red Sea, and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur. They journeyed for three days in the wilderness without finding water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water at Marah because it was bitter—that is why it was named Marah. The people grumbled to Moses, “What are we going to drink?” So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he threw it into the water, the water became drinkable. He made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah and He tested them there. He said, “If you will carefully obey the Lord your God, do what is right in His eyes, pay attention to His commands, and keep all His statutes, I will not inflict any illnesses on you that I inflicted on the Egyptians. For I am Yahweh who heals you.” Then they came to Elim, where there were 12 springs of water and 70 date palms, and they camped there by the waters. The entire Israelite community departed from Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt. The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted. Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger!”⁵

Prologue

The Book of Exodus tells how the Israelites were freed from Egyptian captivity. The beginning of their enslavement begins with Joseph. He had received a vision from God that his family would bow down to him. Due to the jealousy of his brothers, he is

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NASB.

sold into slavery to the Ishmaelite's who subsequently sell him to Egyptians. As a slave, the favor of God is with Joseph and God prospers him. Joseph, as a slave, is given command of all of the slaves of Potiphar's house. He is lied on by the wife of Potiphar who seeks to have a sexual relationship with Joseph. Joseph honors the relationship with God and with his master. He responds to the advances of Mrs. Potiphar by saying, "Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything..., and he has put all that he owns in my charge...he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9).

Potiphar removes Joseph from the palace and places Joseph in prison. However, in prison, the Lord was with Joseph and Joseph was favored among the prisoners. The writer records in Genesis 39 the following words, "But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer" (v. 21). Joseph rose to the same prominence as a prisoner as he did as a slave in Potiphar's house. The Genesis writer concludes by writing, "The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper" (v. 23). God would use the prison cell as a means to get Joseph to Pharaoh's palace where he would be second in command of all of Pharaoh's possessions. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams concerning seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. However, God was with Joseph and who better to prepare for the famine and distribute the resources but Joseph.

It would take twenty-two years for God to fulfill the vision of Joseph's family bowing down to him. Joseph spends thirteen years as a prisoner. He spends seven years during the time of plenty preparing for the time of famine. It is two years into the famine

before his brothers come to Egypt to buy food. After revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph moves the family to Egypt. While in Egypt, the Lord prospered the Israelites. The writer of Exodus records the following words, “But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” (Ex. 1: 7).

Joseph invites his entire family (Jacob his father, and extended family of about seventy people) to stay in Egypt during the years of famine. It is in the land of Egypt where the children of Israel become prosperous. The writer does not give a time frame for how long the children of Israel were in Egypt prior to the death of Joseph and his brothers. There is a startling contrast between verses six and seven of the first chapter of Exodus. The writer notes the death of Joseph and his brothers and then points to the increase in the children of Israel from the seventy which entered. The writer notes “But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” (1: 7).

After Joseph dies, the new Pharaoh did not see things as previous leaders and he enslaved the Israelites and had no mercy on them.⁶ The Pharaoh is moved by fear and speculation to enslave the Israelites. Two things drive his fears. One is the continual growth of the Children of Israel. The writer gives insight into the thinking of Pharaoh by writing, “Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come let us deal wisely with them or else they will multiply...” (1: 9 – 10). Second is the potential for the Israelites to join their enemies in battle. The writer continues, “and in the

⁶ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 28.

event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land” (v. 10).

Between the end of Exodus, the first chapter and the beginning of Exodus, the second chapter, four hundred years have passed. The Children of Israel spent four hundred years enslaved. It could be two or three generations have passed since their entrance into Egypt. Exodus the second chapter picks up the story with paranoid Pharaoh trying to slow the growth of the Israelites through genocide. He orders the Israelite midwives to kill all newborn Israelite boys. Lastly, Pharaoh instructs the Egyptians to express their patriotism by throwing baby boys into the Nile River to drown.

It is into this culture of genocide by Pharaoh, Jehovah provides the deliverer for the Children of Israel. A Levite woman named Jochebed, gives birth to a son. Jochebed hides her son for three months. After three months, there is divine intervention. On the very same day, Jochebed puts her son into a basket on the Nile River while the daughter of Pharaoh is bathing. The child in the basket is found by the daughter of Pharaoh. The writer notes, “When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying and she had pity on him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews children’” (2: 6). Jehovah provides and Moses would be raised a son of Pharaoh by his birth mother.

Moses became emotionally attached to his people. One day, Moses observes an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man unjustifiably. Moses kills the Egyptian and buries him. The next day Moses interrupts a dispute between two Hebrews. When Moses enquires as to the nature of the dispute, one replies, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us; are you intending to kill me as you did the Egyptian” (2: 14). When Pharaoh becomes aware

of what Moses had done, “he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian” (2:15).

Moses’ life can be divided into three forty-year segments. The first forty years, he spends in Pharaoh’s house. The second forty years he spends among the Midianites in the house of Jethro. His final forty years he spends delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt and leading them into the Promised Land.

Forty years have passed since Moses entered Midian. He is now eighty years old. As he travels east, he has an encounter with Jehovah through the burning bush at Mount Sinai. It is at Mount Sinai, that Moses would receive the command to go back to Egypt. Those who sought his life earlier have died. He returns to Egypt to confront Pharaoh with words from God telling him to “let my people go.” Pharaoh refuses to yield to God, so ten plagues are issued to Pharaoh and he resisted them all hardening his heart and holding fast to his position to not free God’s people.⁷ However, the last plagues were too much for Pharaoh because it was one he brought on his own son causing his death.⁸ Victory was on the side of the Hebrews by the power of God’s hand as Pharaoh freed the slaves. After allowing the Israelites to leave, he decided to go after them to kill them all. The people begin to doubt God and Moses as it seemed as though they were trapped, God places a pillar of fire to stop Pharaoh’s army. Moses raises his staff and the Red Sea opened up and God’s people walked across on dry land. As the last person crosses the Rea Sea the water closes on Pharaoh’s army and drowns them. The Israelites were

⁷ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion* (Wheaton, IL: Chariot Victor Publishers, 1991), 56.

⁸ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 33.

enslaved for over 400 years and now able to begin the journey to the walk into their Promised Land.

Led by their shepherd the prophet Moses, they journey through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where Yahweh promises them the land of Canaan (the "Promised Land") in return for their faithfulness. The exodus was one of the most significant events in the history of the Hebrews. It was a unique demonstration of God's power on behalf of his people, who were working under conditions of forced labor for the Egyptians. When the Hebrews were oppressed, they looked back to that great historical event of the Passover and trusted God for their future liberation.⁹

Contextual Analysis

The name by which this book is generally distinguished is borrowed from the Greek Septuagint, in which it is called Exodus ("departure or exit"). The title appropriately represents the key event of the book, which is the Israelites' miraculous flight from bondage into Egypt.¹⁰ This second book of the Pentateuch was written by Moses in 1450 – 1410 B.C. and its key focus is departure and deliverance. It contains a history of the transactions of 145 years, beginning at the death of Joseph, where the Book of Genesis ends, down to the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai. When approaching this text historically, the first book in the Pentateuch, Genesis, plays an important role in understanding the movement of events in the Book

⁹ Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 742.

¹⁰ Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament: Search and Discover* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1978), 25.

Exodus. Genesis revealed God's divine purpose for Israel, while the Book of Exodus exhibited God's divine performance for Israel.¹¹

An early dating of the exodus places it in the fifteenth century B. C. Primary support for this view comes from 1 Kings 6:1, which says that the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel occurred 480 years after Israel's exodus from Egypt.¹² Later dating places the exodus in the thirteenth century B. C. The mention of the city of Rameses in Exodus 1:11 is frequently cited as evidence for this dating, assuming the name corresponds to the nineteenth Dynasty Pharaoh, Rameses II.¹³ Although there may be some dispute about the date of the exodus out of Egypt, there is no disagreement of the bondage and oppression of the Children of Israel.

The Book of Exodus has forty chapters filled with exciting action narratives. To appreciate why this passage was chosen, a general understanding and knowledge of the Exodus narrative is necessary. Jensen states there are eight key words that represent a multicolored story telling the rich history found in the chapters of this book. As the historical meaning of the text is examined, these words are bondage, Moses, plagues, Passover, exodus, commandments, idolatry and tabernacle. These words are evident throughout the narrative in the book of Exodus but are clearly prevalent in the chosen pericope.¹⁴

¹¹ Jensen, *Jensen's Survey*, 83.

¹² P. R. House, *1, 2 Kings* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 326.

¹³ James K. Hoffmeier, "Rameses of the Exodus Narratives in the 13th Century BC: Royal Ramesside Residence," *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (2007): 281-89.

¹⁴ Jensen, *Jensen's Survey*, 89.

The word bondage is clearly evident and is a key word throughout the book and the pericope. Exodus 1:11-14 reads

Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage -- in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

After the death of Jacob, the Hebrews, all the sons to include Joseph who brought them to Egypt, did not leave Egypt when the famine in Canaan had ended. Now, instead of being guest they were now considered pest. They were multiplying rapidly increasing in number and consuming much of the resources. The Pharaoh began to worry about a possible mutiny so he made them all slaves and enforced brutal labor polices to control the Hebrew immigrants.¹⁵ Pharaoh now Rameses was also disregarding and disrespecting the God of Moses by not releasing the Hebrews from bondage, but attempting to punish them even more by ordering the taskmasters to deny the Hebrews straw for the making of bricks. They were to mix mortar and double the production of the bricks but without straw. They also carried these materials to the places where they were to be formed into buildings, and serving the builders while employed in those public works. Josephus says, "The Egyptians contrived a variety of ways to afflict the Israelites, for they enjoined them to cut a great number of channels for the river, and to build walls for their cities and ramparts that they might restrain the river, and hinder its waters from stagnating upon its overrunning its own banks, they set them also "to build pyramids."¹⁶

¹⁵ Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 53.

¹⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Biblesoft, 1996, electronic database.

Moses is the key figure in the Book of Exodus and this pericope. It is said he is the author of the first five books of the Canon. Moses was destined to deliver the Jewish people from bondage was hidden in a wicker basket, placed in the Nile River by his mother Jochebed, and found by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2: 5 – 10). Moses was adopted and grafted into the royal family, lived in the royal palace, and dined at the Pharaoh's table. The exposure Moses had to royal living and leadership skills that prepare him for all the challenges that were awaiting him in the years come. Richards states, "that Moses lived as prince of Egypt for forty years; he was an outcast in Midian learning of his God. Becoming an agent for him for forty years, he accomplished his life work of delivering God's children from bondage and leading them to the promised land during his last forty years."¹⁷

Moses was given miraculous powers to authenticate him as God's messenger. These signs were intended to convince the Hebrew's, not Pharaoh, that Moses was the deliverer (Exodus 4:5). From administering the ten plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, to parting the Red Sea and drawing water from a rock at Marah, it was clear to everyone that Moses had an encounter with Yahweh (Exodus 15: 14 – 16, 23).

The ten plagues of Egypt are key to the understanding of what God means when he says in Exodus 20:3, "Thou shall not have any other God's before me." The unprecedented series of disasters striking Egypt probably culminated in the spring or early summer (c. 1400 B. C.) They were also catastrophic events to show Pharaoh and the

¹⁷ Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 55.

Egyptians the insignificance of their gods.¹⁸ Every plague event was against the many gods they worshiped.

1. The first plague was against the Nile and the goddess Isis, and Khnum the guardian of the Nile (Exodus 7:17). Moses stretched forth his staff and turned the Nile into blood.
2. The second plague was against the god Heqet, a frog-headed goddess. Moses sent frogs to invade the land of the Egyptians (Exodus 8:13-14).
3. The third plague was against the god Set, the god of the dessert. Moses sent gnats and flees to invade the land (Exodus 8:19).
4. The fourth plague was against the god Uatchit, the fly god. Moses sent swarms of flies to bother the Egyptians, but the Hebrews were left alone (Exodus 8:21-24).
5. The fifth plague was against the god Hathor, the cattle god. Moses sent death to the livestock of the Egyptians while the cattle of the Hebrews lived (Exodus 9:7).
6. The sixth plague was against the gods Sekhmet, Sunu and Isis, the gods over health and disease. Moses sent boils through ashes to fall on the Egyptians (Exodus 9:8-12).
7. The seventh plague was against the sky god Nut. Moses sent hail and fire to fall all over the land.
8. The eighth plague was against the crop god Osiris. Moses sent locust to devoured all the crops, however the Hebrew crops were left alone (Exodus 10:1-20).
9. The ninth plague was against the sun god Re. Moses sent complete darkness upon Egypt for 3 days, however the homes of the Hebrews stayed lite.
10. Lastly, the tenth and final plague was issued by Pharaoh himself. This plague was against Isis, the god that protects children. Pharaoh ordered all first-born males to be killed (Exodus 12:29-30). What Pharaoh did not realize is, he was issuing the death of his own son.¹⁹

¹⁸ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 1699.

¹⁹ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 33.

According to Horts' theses, the plagues were all-natural phenomena that could and did otherwise occur in Egypt but were extremely harsh just prior to the exodus due to extraordinary rainfall at the headwaters of the Nile and the resultant environmental-biological effects.²⁰ These include the following questions, which may roughly describe in rhetorical fashion the range of views relative to whether or not the plagues were real historical events:

(1) Were the plagues merely natural phenomena later embellished by tradition and attributed by storytellers to supernatural power summoned by the actions of Moses and Aaron? (2) Were the plagues natural phenomena that God foresaw and then gave Moses and Aaron instructions on how to be seen as summoning them by various symbolic actions? (3) Were the plagues "natural" phenomena brought about fully by supernatural means and timed directly by God (i.e., God initiated all the plagues as natural phenomena under his control and put them in a timed sequence also under his control)? (4) Were the plagues genuine miracles intended to replicate in extreme fashion natural phenomena that can and do occur in Egypt so as to demonstrate that God controlled both the environment and the "gods" the Egyptians thought produced the environment and that God could do with it/them whatever he wills?²¹

The Passover is another key element in the exodus event and this pericope. The word comes from the Hebrew word "*pasha*" which means "to pass over." It became the name of the most important annual festivals instituted to commemorate God's grace in sparing Jewish son's the night He struck Egypt's homes with death. That night in which the Passover took place was the turning point in the history of Israel. It was the beginning of a new era for the people of God who were about to be redeemed from the clutches of their oppressor.²²

²⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, "Exodus," *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 191.

²¹ Stuart, *The New American Commentary*, 93.

²² Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 59.

God instructed the people through Moses and Aaron to make their preparations for leaving the land in haste. They were to go to the Egyptians and ask them for their jewels of silver and gold (Exodus 11:2, 3), a request to which the Egyptians agreed, perhaps out of fear of the Hebrews and in the belief that the gifts would bring about an end of the terrors that had struck the land. The Hebrews were also instructed to kill and prepare a year-old lamb for each family, and small families were to share, for this was the last meal to be eaten in the land of Egypt. It was a meal filled with symbolism according to Miller. The lamb was the main course for the Passover. The bitter herbs represented the bitterness of slavery. The vegetables dipped in salt representing lowly beginnings of Jews in slavery. A paste made with nuts, apples, and wine representing the mortar and building blocks. Unleavened bread (without yeast) representing the Jews leaving with haste not having time for the bread to rise. The blood of the lamb was to be upon the doorposts and lintels of the houses in which the Passover meal was being eaten that night.²³ The Hebrews were promised that wherever the blood was on the door no harm would come to that household. They were also instructed to prepare unleavened bread. At midnight, the death angel of the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh himself to the lowest captive in a dungeon; not a single house of the Egyptians escaped tragedy. When Pharaoh saw what had happened, he ordered Moses and the people to leave the land at once (Exodus 12:31-37).

The biblical record says that about 600,000 Hebrew men left Egypt. Together with women and children the total would have been in excess of two million people, a

²³ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 35.

grievous blow to the economy and pride of Egypt.²⁴ The Passover festival took place in the month of March or April. As a symbol of redemption that links life and the shedding of blood, Passover speaks to us of Christ our Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5: 7).

The exodus is the basis for this chapter and is a key element in the pericope. After Pharaoh's son demise in his defeat to Moses guided by Yahweh, Moses and the Israelites had to depart Egypt speedily with all their possessions. Moses did not take the quickest route to exit Egypt which would have been a route that parallels the Mediterranean coastline in Philistine country. Though that was shorter, if he had led them that way, they would have faced war and would have changed their minds and return to Egypt" (Exo 12: 37). Moses turns south taking one of the roads less traveled.

Pharaoh has a change of mind and realizes he makes a huge mistake by releasing the Israelites from bondage. He wants his slaves and possessions back so he sends his chariots to pursue them in the desert. There was a mysterious, hovering pillar guiding the Israelites. By day it looks like a cloud shielding them, and by night it glowed like fire providing light. As Pharaoh's army envelop upon them, a pillar of fire appears to stop their advancement until Yahweh provides an escape through the parting of the Red Sea. When the children of Israel had crossed, Jehovah removes the darkness which covered the Egyptian. They advance into the Red Sea. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong easterly wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided (Exodus 13:21).

²⁴ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 37.

It is highly probable that both Moses and Aaron first planted their footsteps on the untrodden sand, encouraging the people to follow them. The people have moved from the certainty of death with the Egyptians to the possibility of life by walking through walled water on dry land. Two million Israelites trusted Moses and Aaron and walked without fear and reservation, and without fear of the treacherous walls. When considering the multitudes that followed the two leaders, the immense number who through infancy and old age were incapable of hastening their movements, but together with all the appurtenances of the camp, the strong and steadfast character of the leaders' faith was strikingly manifested.²⁵

The Egyptians pursued the Israelites into the Red Sea. As Moses lifted up the rod, the place where the ground was hardened became muddy. The water which was separated for children of Israel began to collapse. The Egyptians turned in fear to move back towards their dry land but they had passed almost entirely through the sea. They saw the water coming back into its usual place and depth and could not make it back to their shore before God swept them into the sea. The return of the water back to its usual place may have taken a few minutes or may have been virtually instantaneous; the text does not say. It was fast enough that no Egyptians could get back to shore, but all were killed.²⁶

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore,

²⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible with Table of Contents* (Oak Harbor, WA: eBible Study Library, 2013), 58.

²⁶ Stuart, *The New American Commentary*, 345.

the name of it was called Marah. The people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet (Exodus 15:22–25). Their thirst quenched, the people next complained of hunger, and Yahweh obliges them with a miraculous rain of bread from the sky called manna.²⁷ It originally appeared in the form of thin flakes, like frost on the ground, around the Israelite camp (Exodus 16:14, 15).²⁸ Each morning, with the exception of the Sabbath, manna covered the ground. The Israelites used it like flour grinding it to make flat bread that tasted like honey-flavored cakes.²⁹

The commandments are paramount to the exodus story. When we think of the Ten Commandments, we think of the Old Testament and the law of Moses. Yahweh brings Moses full-circle by guiding him to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp. This is the same location where many months earlier, God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush. Their stay at Sinai was not a short one. They built a bivouac camp at the base of this mountain and stayed there for over a year. It is here at Sinai where God organizes the Israelites into twelve tribes governed by a new set of laws (Exodus 21: 1–17).

Moses leaves the people just for a short time to have an encounter with God on the mountain. This is the same location where Yahweh or I AM speaking to Moses prior

²⁷ James Luther Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1988), 146–147.

²⁸ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 1392.

²⁹ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 37.

to the exodus life changing instructions that will change the direction of a nation, and now he speaks again after the exodus. God gives the commandments on two tablets.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord you God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

The first four commandments tell of man's duty toward God, and the last six commandments tell of man's duty towards his fellowman. God makes a covenant and tells Israel how He should be worshipped publicly and privately. He showed how he had been faithful to them by their deliverance from bondage and now Israel is to show their faithfulness.³⁰ Idolatry at Sinai is sadly a vital part of the pericope because it shows the unfaithfulness of a people that had no reason to doubt the Lord. Israel's sin was of the worst kind. Spiritual idolatry and corruption would not be tolerated by God because he declared he was a jealous God.

Moses comes down from Mount Sinai carrying the two tablets of stone inscribed by God. The Israelites had already broken the first two commandments even before

³⁰ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 39.

Moses had announced them. They made a golden calf out of gold and metal melted down from their jewelry and possessions. Moses angrily throws the tablets of stone destroying them at the base of the mountain because the people showed their infidelity. They worshiped a bull-like god named APIS, painted as a man with a bull's head. He was a fertility god who promises large herbs and harvests.

God calls Israel a “stiff-necked people,” and was outraged saying He wanted to come up in the midst of them and consume them. This idiom is based on a farm animal stiffening its neck to refuse the yoke. For the people of Israel, bearing the yoke was living in obedience to the covenant; stiffening the neck against the yoke was disobedience.³¹ Moses’ intercession was desperate, appealing to God’s mercy and the consequent renewal of fellowship between Israel and God was conditional upon the people’s repentance for sin and determination to obey the words of the covenant.³² Israel was not utterly consumed because of God’s mercy and the prophets, judges and men like Moses who pleaded with God on behalf of the people.

The last of the prominent areas in which the exodus experience is accentuated is the building of the Tabernacle. Moses gathered all the congregations of the Children of Israel together and said to them what the Lord hath commanded them to do. God gave specifications in detail concerning the commandments and the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-31, 35:1-40:48). God tells Moses this will be a portable worship center where his presence will dwell and the people can meet and worship God in this place. God also instructs there will be a priesthood to serve at the Tabernacle. The priest

³¹ J. D. Barry et al., eds., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

³² Jensen, *Jensen’s Survey*, 93.

will be commissioned to offer sacrifices for sin so that fellowship can be restored and forgiven sinners can have access to the Lord. The Tabernacle not only stands for access to God in Israel's religion, but also for atonement and reconciliation.³³ God picks the older brother of Moses, Aaron, as Israel's first high priest. Aaron's four sons will work under his authority as priest. Aaron and his sons are fitted for robe- covering tunics, belts, and turbans "to give them dignity and respect."³⁴

The completion of the Tabernacle was an external pledge of the permanence of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord has taken up His abode in the mist of His people. The tabernacle stood for access to God in Israel's religion as well as for atonement and reconciliation.³⁵

Detailed Analysis

An enormous amount of information in this section can be found in the contextual analysis portion of this document which consists of historical and literary context information that is analyzing the Old Testament text. This portion of the document will reiterate some of that information and show movement within the pericope. A purposeful effort is made in this chapter to identify who is involved in this story because the history of the Israelite people will show similar behaviors and patterns are found in the present context.

³³ Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 67.

³⁴ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 41.

³⁵ Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 67.

The purpose of the Book of Exodus is to show how God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:12–16) was fulfilled when the Lord rescued the Israelite descendants of Abraham from Egyptian bondage. It also explains the origin of the Passover festival, the beginning of the nation by God's establishment of a covenant with Israel, and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Exodus tells the moving story of a mighty and loving God, Creator of the universe, beyond all limitations of time and space, who intervenes in history on behalf of a helpless group of slaves.³⁶ Exodus also tells of an unusual man, whose eighty-years of preparation are equally divided between the palace of a king and the pasture of a nomadic priest. Moses is a reluctant leader. He defies the pharaoh. He speaks with God face to face. Exodus focuses on redemption. It tells of deliverance "from the power of an alien dominion, and enjoyment of the resulting freedom. It speaks of a deliverer, and what he does to achieve deliverance. Lastly, Exodus tells of the God who "remembers" his promise to the Hebrew patriarchs (Exodus 2:24)."³⁷

It was shortly after the Hebrews were delivered out of the hand of Pharaoh they began to grumble and complain in the desert. They criticized and protested against Moses in spite of being eye witnesses to the bountiful miracles performed by Moses, from the ten plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptian people, to the parting of the Red Sea, walking to safety on dry ground, and watching the Pharaoh's army and his chariots drown. It was clear that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was on the side of the Hebrews and he was their friend.

³⁶ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 738.

³⁷ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 739.

Moses and the liberated Israelites set out from the Red Sea, and went into the wilderness of Shur. They were about three day's journey into the wilderness somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula, and had already exhausted their water supply. It becomes clear that they are not spiritually free. Reaching Marah, the place of a well of undrinkable bitter water, they became angry because they could not drink the water. The people grumbled and murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

The shortage of water there is followed by a lack of food in the camp. Although the Israelites were given provisions for their journey, they were at the last of what Pharaoh had supplied for them. They set out again moving towards the Promise Land and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin. The whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled and complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:1–3, ESV). How easy it was for the Israelites to forget that God was with them when things were difficult! They showed no faith in their leader and in their God. Their unbelief, fickleness and impatience were displayed in their character as they vehemently spoke out against God, Moses and Aaron. It is clear based on their attitudes, statements and actions that they were in a degraded state of mind (Exodus 16:1–3, ESV).

Marah's grumbling had been about water. Now, a little farther along journey, the grumbling was about food. It was, of course, another unannounced, unexplained test of

their willingness to trust God. In the case of the Israelites, they should have been able to say, “If God is visibly leading us in the form of the pillar of cloud, then we’re supposed to be here, and our experience so far tells us that he’ll provide for us this time too.”³⁸ It was, however, a serious breach of faith to grumble against the living God, and that point Moses made so eloquently by saying simply, “You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD” (Exodus 16:8).

God’s provision for His people at this point was to exceed their expectations. He promised that He would ‘rain down’ bread from heaven, and for forty years in the wilderness, He feeds the people with manna (Psalm 78:24–25), and with quails. This was a supernatural provision. There was nothing ordinary about this miracle. It is described as God sending the ‘food of angels’ from heaven in an extraordinary way.³⁹ It was also a daily provision, yet it did not appear every day. God purposely tested his people to see if they would walk in his law (Exodus 16:4), by sending manna for six days out of seven, with the promise of a double portion on the sixth day that would provide two days’ food. This is extremely important, because by the time the Sabbath law is given at Sinai, the pattern of a weekly day of rest has already been established. While the manna was available for all, it had to be gathered strictly according to God’s regulations. Those who left the manna on the ground until the following day discovered that it had putrefied (Exodus 16:20); on the other hand, those who gathered in the double portion on the sixth day found the portion for the seventh to be as fresh as any other. At the same time, any

³⁸ Stuart, *The New American Commentary*, 369.

³⁹ Iain D. Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2006), 65.

who went out on the Sabbath day for a fresh supply discovered there was none (Exodus 16:26).⁴⁰

The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. The manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land and there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year' (Joshua 5:11–12). It was food for the wilderness, and the supply never stopped until God fulfilled his promise and took his people into the land of Canaan.⁴¹

Reflections

The oppression of the Israelites in Egypt really gets God's attention. God hears the cry of his people and does something about it. He delivers them from the hand of Pharaoh's system and leaves His powerful mark on the Egyptians. The sting of God was so great, Pharaoh was glad to see them leave. Pharaoh even allowed them to take all the gold and goods they could carry. The scriptures say "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Proverbs 13:22). This is hope for the believer inasmuch as we should take comfort in knowing we have a God that listens for our every cry. The scriptures say "If anyone causes one of these little ones, those who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

⁴⁰ Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus*, 66.

⁴¹ Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus*, 67.

This pericope gives assurance that we serve a God of his word. It is good to know we can stand on the promises of God. God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that he would rescue the Israelite descendants of Abraham from Egyptian bondage and he leads his people to the promise land. There are many promises which speak personally. Just a few of them are, He said he'd "never leave me, nor forsake me" (Hebrews 13:5), "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19), and "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Lastly, this text teaches never to look back. Once God delivers you from your past, there is no need to look back to remember. When the Hebrews began to run out of food they began to panic, doubt and look back at Egypt when they had plenty. They forgot what God had done for them, how He delivered them, how He softened Pharaoh's heart, how He stopped Pharaoh with pillars of fire, how He opened the Red Sea. The scripture says to "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness *and* rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:18-19).

This text will contribute to the final project and will add valuable content in showing that there is danger in looking back when God is moving you forward. One such example is found in the Old Testament book of Genesis 19:26, when Lot's wife looked back at the city of Sodom and Gomorrah and became a pillar of salt. Looking back can cause you to lose your direction because you can get off course and step out of your lane. Runners never look back; they keep their eyes on the prize. Looking back can cause runners to stumble and fall and end up losing the race.

New Testament

The passage of scripture chosen to support the final Doctoral Project and to analyze for the purpose of this paper is found in the New Testament book of The Gospel According to St. John 4:1-34. The pericope is extensive; however, it is imperative the entire text is read. The key section of the pericope that will be examined closely is verses five through twenty-six.

Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband. Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that

Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He. And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime, His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Therefore, the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

Prologue

The Gospel according to Saint John is one of four Gospels in the Canon. The Gospels depict the chronicles of Jesus by telling the story of his life, death and resurrection. This Gospel was written between 85 – 90 A.D. John, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James, is the author. John was an intricate member of the inner circle of Jesus along with Peter and James. John was the youngest of the disciples when called by Jesus, and he also lived the longest of those in Jesus' inter-circle. He reminds us in this book of the creation of this world and that Jesus was there in the beginning of time as human kind know it (John 1:3). The key focus of this Gospel is Christ and His Deity.⁴²

The first three books of the New Testament also called the Synoptic Gospels, share a common thread in the way they see the life of Jesus. The synoptic gospels contain short traditions of the teaching and actions of Jesus which are loosely linked together.⁴³ The narratives within these three books are very similar in substance, giving critical

⁴² *The New King James Version* (Oxford, UK: Scofield Study Bible, 1982), 1449.

⁴³ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed., Oxford Bible Series (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 99, accessed December 22, 2016, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0611/2001051006-d.html>.

observation of the life of Jesus. Mark Powell states in the book *The Gospels*, there is indeed a distinction between the Gospels (Synoptic) and John. The distinction is based on the recognition that Matthew, Mark and Luke contain a large number of parallel passages, that is, passages that are very similar or even identical to each other.⁴⁴

John's Gospel is different inasmuch as it does not have the same or similar account of segments of the life of Jesus. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus rarely makes overt claims about his significance because his teaching focuses on God. In John, however, Jesus repeatedly makes explicit claims about himself. The "I am" sayings provide a clear illustration: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), "I am the door" (John 10:9).⁴⁵ Clement of Alexandria confirms the aforementioned and described the Gospel of John as "a spiritual Gospel" recognizing even in the early third century that this book is noticeably different from the three Synoptic Gospels.⁴⁶ In the middle of the second century in his dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr referred to the Gospels as "memoirs of the apostles."

Imbedded in the early part of John's Gospel, in the fourth chapter, Jesus and the disciples are making their way to Galilee, but they had to go through Samaria. Jesus came to a province about eight miles southwest of Samaria at the southern base of Ebal, a place called Sychar. He stopped there to rest from the noonday sun at a well which was on a plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. The disciples had separated from Jesus to a nearby community to procure supplies to consume at once and for the journey

⁴⁴ Mark Allan Powell, *Fortress Introduction to the Gospels* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 16.

⁴⁵ Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 100.

⁴⁶ Powell, *Fortress Introduction*, 112.

ahead (John 4:8).

As Jesus was sitting at the well, tired from his journey, a woman from Samaria approached the well to draw water in the midday. The unorthodox encounter with Jesus was not normal as Jews and Samaritans did not communicate with each other. However, Jesus did not allow tradition to get in the way of his mission to heal the brokenhearted and set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4: 18). Jesus asked the woman for some water to drink. He in return offered the woman to drink of the living water he had to give and if she drank of this living water, she would never thirst again. Her willingness to receive the water Jesus had to offer provided salvation to her and her household as she left her water pot and ran back to the city proclaiming “there is a man that told me everything about my life and I told him nothing!”

Contextual Analysis

It seems as though Jesus would be someone that would try to avoid conflict being He is the Son of God and knowing that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33, NKJV). In the beginning of the chapter the text shows Jesus departing from the presents of the religious leaders because of his being placed in a position of competition with John the Baptist. They were saying Jesus was baptizing more than John but it was actually his disciples doing the baptizing (John 4:1). Jesus co-operated with John the Baptist in administering his baptism, through his disciples (John 3:22). A question concerning this baptismal rite was raised with John's disciples by the Jews, evidently to provoke jealousy between Jesus and John, which led these disciples to come to John with a concern. This gave John another opportunity to give a noble testimony to Christ. The

jealousy of the Pharisees and the arrest of John is what caused the Lord to return home to Galilee.

So He departed, leaving for Galilee, leaving a situation of conflict only to seek more conflict. Because the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritan people, the normal route taken to avoid the Samaritans was to travel around the town taking the circuitous bypass along the coast beside the Jordan River. However, Jesus is very intentional in the path he travels because the text say's "He needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4, NKJV).

Jesus and his disciples enter a province called Sychar close to meal time so the disciples left Jesus alone while they departed to buy food. As Jesus is resting at a well in the heat of the noon day sun, he is approached by a Samaritan woman looking to draw water from the well. The reality of our Lord's fatigue testifies to the reality of His humanity. As a man, He was weary and required food and drink, but as God, He could tell the woman at the well felt guilty about her past and could see her deepest need. Jesus wastes no time engaging this woman in a conversation asking her to draw him some water to drink (John 4:7).

This was unusual considering Jews and Samaritans made every effort to avoid socializing with each other. Although they were alike in many ways, requiring the same foods, following the same occupations, having the same hopes and ambitions and suffering the same diseases, there was a racial hatred that kept them apart. The Samaritans, both in blood and religion, were crossbred Jews. The origin of this hostility between these two peoples can be traced back to the Assyrian colonization of the land of Israel when Jeroboam became King, (II Kings 17:21-23). They were the poor of the land

that were left behind, and many other Jews afterwards, incorporated themselves. From this followed the antagonism of the Samaritans to the Jews at the return from captivity which led to the erection of rival temples on Mount Gerizim. From that time the spirit of bitterness lingered, and this accounts for the Jewish reproach against the Samaritans. This was most likely in the mind of the woman at the well when she said, “Why are you talking to me knowing the history between our people” (John 4:9), and “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain (John 4:20).⁴⁷

The woman knew the communication between them was not appropriate so she questioned Jesus’ motives realizing what was happening is not only risky but unlawful as well according to Jewish law. “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” (John 4:9). Jesus waives her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best healed by being slighted, and by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them. Jesus responds with a statement that completely turns the conversation into an opportunity to deal with the serious issues of this woman’s life. Instead of Jesus being the one receiving the water, he is the one giving the water. “Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” (John 4:10).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible: The Life and Times of All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967), 236.

⁴⁸ Leslie Church, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 1523.

Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things. Jesus is referring to this woman the opportunity of obtaining salvation through the acceptance of receiving the Living Water. The favor extended to the woman once accepted, would open her life for Jesus to scrutinize it, not for condemnation but for conviction and change. You would think the woman would comprehend what Jesus was saying because he had nothing to draw his water with (John 4:11). This was a clue He may had been talking about something other than drinking water, yet she thought He was speaking of some magic water or an eternal thirst-quencher.⁴⁹

The woman realizes now that Jesus is talking about a different type of drinking water and perceives that He is a holy man, yet she continued to hold up her defenses with a bit of sarcasm saying, “you want to give me water and have nothing to draw water with. Don’t you know the well is over 100 feet deep?⁵⁰ Do you think you are greater than the one who gave us this well, our forefather Jacob?” In other words, are you wiser, or better able to find water, than Jacob was? It seems that she supposed that he meant that he could direct her to some living spring, or to some better well in that region, and that this implied more knowledge or skill than Jacob had. The Samaritans were composed partly of the remnant of the ten tribes, and partly of people sent from Chaldea; still, they considered themselves descendants of Jacob.

Jesus did not directly answer her question, or say that he was greater than Jacob, but he gave her an answer by which she might infer that he was. He did not despise or undervalue Jacob or his gifts; however great might be the value of that well, the water

⁴⁹ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 353.

⁵⁰ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 353.

could not altogether remove thirst (John 4:13). Jesus gives us a wonderful example of how to avoid confrontation by not giving insult or showing disrespect to your opponent. Never degrade your position while never belittling the other person's position. He goes on the say "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Simply stated, Jesus says "He who drinks this water will not wish to seek for happiness in other objects." "Satisfied" with the grace of Christ, he will not desire the pleasures and amusements of this world. The woman did not understand totally what was happening but she trusted Jesus enough to ask Him for his special water saying "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not." The mysterious words of the Jewish stranger she cannot yet understand, but she is deeply stirred, and one thing seemed plain - if she could have this water she would thirst no more, and would not be compelled to come to the well to draw water.

If anyone ever tells you that religion ought to stick to its business of saving souls and stay out of ethical issues of life, do not believe them! What the woman heard next was the surprise of her life because Jesus related her need for water to the ethics of her sexual activity. In order to make it possible for the woman to receive the living water about which Jesus spoke, it would be necessary for her to deal with the tragic nature of her sinful life. Therefore, Jesus confronted the woman with her life.⁵¹ The masterful Jesus uses this moment as an opportunity to dig deeper into the Samaritan woman's personal affairs by asking her to "Go, call your husband and come here" (John 4:16).

⁵¹ Gerald L. Borchert, "John 1-11," *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 205.

The woman tried to avoid the issue of her ordeal with men in her life by declaring she had no husband but Jesus spelled out clearly her ethical problem. After having five husbands, she no longer found the marriage ritual necessary (John 4:18). Jewish tradition permitted three husbands, but she obviously had long passed that more lenient rule. Her notion that Jesus is a holy man is confirmed as they continue to interact as Jesus continues to dig deep into her life issues with relationships as Jesus reveals that she has had five husbands and the one whom she is living with presently is not her husband.

Although Jesus was a stranger to this woman, he was able to reveal things that only the closest people to her would know about her life. He now had the ability and persuasion to dig deeper not only to meet her physical needs, but her spiritual needs as well. Jesus says to her in addressing her comment concerning worshipping on the mountain, “the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father” (John 4:21). Jesus speaks things to this woman that she has never heard before. He is able to reach back into the past traditions to bring them forward and then dismantle them by saying they matter. In other words, it really does not matter where you worship God, on this mountain, in Jerusalem or anywhere. He continues to tell the woman that her people think they know how to worship God, but they are wrong, while the Jews have a good understanding of worshipping God, but none of that is really going to matter soon because God is looking for people to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Jesus is saying that it is who you are and the way you live that matters before God. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration (John 4: 24).

The woman speaking in the text now is much different than the woman that met Jesus at the well in the noon hour. It is apparent the more she talked to Jesus, the more her thirst was quenched. Her thirst was satisfied to the point she left her most valuable possession behind. The woman was so excited and filled with the living water that is left her water pot with Jesus and went back to the town telling everyone to “come see a man who has told me everything about myself. This must be the Christ.” As the woman was leaving, the disciples were returning with food for Jesus but he had no desire to eat physical food because His soul was full of the spirit as stated to the disciples (John 4:32).

Detailed Analysis

Why didn’t Jews associate with Samaritans? After all Samaria was one of the most important cities in Israel’s history. It was the capital of the northern kingdom for hundreds of years. Throughout the Old Testament, Samaria was a Jewish city that was the home of many Jewish commoners and Jewish kings. What is wrong with Samaritans? The fanaticism of Jewish hatred, the fastidiousness of Jewish Pharisaism which led countrymen when traveling alone to avoid that route, did not stop Jesus from his earthly passion of touching the lives of people and setting the captives free (Luke 4:18). To understand this strange animosity between New Testament Jews and what appear to be their fellow countrymen, we have to do a bit of digging.

First, we have to turn back the clock to King David. He had a son named Solomon, who built the first grand Temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem. In Jewish society, the throne was supposed to be passed from father to son, and David was from the tribe of Judah. That meant all of Israel’s kings would be from Judah’s line. However, Solomon

was so rebellious to Yahweh that Yahweh decided to smash the kingdom of Israel into two warring nations: Judah in the south and Israel in the north. He chose a man named Jeroboam to be the first king of the north. Jeroboam was from the tribe of Ephraim, which made him a shocking choice for a Jewish monarch. After Solomon's death, everyone expected Solomon's son Rehoboam to take over as king however, when Rehoboam announced that he intended to be a cruel leader, ten tribes decided to break away and follow Jeroboam instead. Those ten tribes became the northern kingdom of Israel while the remaining two tribes named themselves Judah.

Eventually the city of Samaria was chosen as the capital of the north. After the dust settled from the civil war, Yahweh continued to preserve David's line of kings in Judah, and of course the people in the south felt like their kings were more legitimate than the rulers of the north. This is what the psalmist is referring to in Psalm the seventy-eighth chapter when he writes: "Then God rejected the tents of Joseph, He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loved" (Psalm 78:67-68).

Could it be Jesus needed to go through Samaria to reconnect with people like himself? The Samaritans were rejected, ostracized, different people that were looked down upon and considered "foreigners" as with one of the ten lepers that returned to say thank you to Jesus for his healing (Luke 17:17-19). The word says "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46). And Jesus was accused by the Jews of being a Samaritan possessed by a demon (John 8:48). Or could it be Jesus made a detour

through Samaria to show and teach that He was above all religious and racial prejudices and that true worship consisted of worshipping God in spirit and in truth?⁵²

He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat on the side of this well. It was about the sixth hour or noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water expecting to see no one because most people fetched their water in the cool of the morning or evening.

His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food (John 4: 5–8). Jesus now has the perfect opportunity to engage the woman without the opposition of the disciples. This is an important point when dealing with issues in the church particularly with situations of tradition. Everyone cannot and will not be onboard with you when dealing with certain things that are deeply rooted traditions, and many times your biggest opposition will be with your leadership and people that are close to you. It is here where Jesus does his greatest work, when his disciples are away buying food (John 4:8).

It is necessary to point out that everyone had an agenda. The Pharisees and Sanhedrin's agenda were to start confusion and jealousy between John the Baptist and Jesus. The disciples' agenda was to buy food to eat for the weak body. The Samaritan woman's agenda was to draw water at noon so she could avoid people, and the Lord's agenda was to completely deal with this woman's sinful life (past, present and future), so she could have an authentic worship experience.

The woman came to the well for two reasons: driven by her necessity for water to satisfy her physical needs in which she was cognizant of, but also, she was not aware she

⁵² Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, 236.

was there to fulfill her innermost desire to be healed from her bad relationships where she had been rejected, ostracized, and misused. This is why she is very cautious of trusting Jesus at the well. She was not accustomed to being treated with such respect from Jews and from men or from anyone. Because of this, she would go to the well when others were not there. Here, Jesus was offering her a gift when normally she was accustomed to men taking things from her (John 4:10). The woman understood our Lord only in a literal sense. In his words there was a mystical meaning. By the water which he offered her, he meant the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is often represented in the scriptures under the figure of water. It is He of whom the prophet Isaiah speaks when he says, that God will pour out water upon thirsty souls.⁵³ The New Living Translation says in Isaiah 44:3, “For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children.”

Jesus addresses a need of hers that only God could fulfill. He knew if he did not speak to this woman’s situation she would continue to thirst in her quest to have a true loving relationship. Jesus says to this woman that the water she came to draw would not satisfy her thirst. The water from the earthly spring would quench the thirst only for a short time; nor would it allay her appetite, but the water he gives if she receives it, she would never thirst again (John 4:13-14).

It is important to realize God do not force himself on anyone. He offers himself as a gift through His son Jesus as with the Living Water in this text. Once we open ourselves up to receive His gift, our life and situations concerning our life change. Once this

⁵³ Thomas Hartwell Horne, *The Entire Works of the Rev. Charles Simeon, M. A.* (London, UK: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), 280.

woman asks for the water that Jesus offers, immediately her life conditions were exposed and addressed. This is part of the answer of our blessed Lord to the Samaritan woman.

Our Lord was conversing the woman, and showed her that he was perfectly acquainted with all the evils she had committed in her former life and the most secret history, and with those in the indulgence of which she was still living; and not from report merely, but from his own omniscient mind, from which nothing could be hid.⁵⁴

In Jesus dealing with her past, He had told her, that “she had had five husbands; and that the person with whom she was now living was not her husband” (Jn. 4:17-18). She, wishing to get rid of so painful a subject, proposed a question relative to a controversy which then existed between the traditions of their people, as to the place where God was to be worshipped.⁵⁵ She wanted to know what his sentiments were on a point that was at issue between the Jews and the Samaritans, namely, whether God was to be worshipped at Jerusalem, or at Mount Gerizim in Samaria.⁵⁶ The Samaritans, indeed, had much to say in their own behalf and in support of the cause which they maintained. They could say that on Mount Gerizim, for the sanctity of which they pleaded, Abraham himself had built an altar. Jacob had also. They could also with truth affirm, that Moses himself, under the special direction of Jehovah, had commanded that all the congregations of Israel, as soon as they should gain possession of the Promised Land, should assemble around Mount Gerizim.

⁵⁴ Horne, *Horae Homileticae*, 282.

⁵⁵ Horne, *Horae Homileticae*, 282-283.

⁵⁶ Horne, *Horae Homileticae*, 297.

In answering her question, the Lord informed her that the Samaritans “knew not whom they worshipped” (Jn. 4:17). Though they occupied the land of Israel, they were not Israelites, but foreigners, whom the king of Assyria had sent to occupy the land, when he carried captive the ten tribes of Israel. Nor did they, in reality, know the true God. On the other hand, the Jews knew they worshipped Jehovah alone and they possessed that revelation of God’s will, through the knowledge of which alone any human being could be saved.⁵⁷ The Bible says in Roman 1:16, “salvation is to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” Our Lord, in reply to her question, tells her, that the time was now come, when the Father was no longer to be worshipped in any one place more than another; but that in every place under heaven, those, and those only, should have access to him, who “worshipped him in spirit and in truth.”⁵⁸

Reflection

Jesus was a master at taking normal everyday situations and turning them into teachable, religious and life changing experiences. By studying his example, we are shown it is not difficult to engage someone in a religious conversation if we allow the situation to develop naturally. The opportunity was made available because of the willingness of Jesus to take a detour through Samaria and a risk of talking to this unnamed woman that was against the tradition of the Jews. Clearly, some traditions are only barriers and obstacles that stand in the way of answers, solutions, meaningful relationships and sometimes obstruct healing both physically and spiritually.

⁵⁷ Horne, *Horae Homileticae*, 284.

⁵⁸ Horne, *Horae Homileticae*, 297.

This text shows no matter the direction you are headed, opportunities to make a God impact moment in the lives of people are always available if we would only look for them. In many instances, it means changing directions or routines. In this text the opportunity, perhaps the woman's water pot, was a big turning point. This point is suggested because she left her crutch, a part of her identity, her most valuable possession behind with Jesus. Whenever there is an encounter with the Divine, you must leave things behind. Here she came thirsty to draw still water, she came with broken relationships, and she came with a damaged reputation in the community. After her encounter with Jesus, she received new living water never to thirst again; a new relationship never to be lonely again; and a new reputation never to be ashamed again. Also, to bring the Old Testament and the New Testament Pericopes together, it is important to note the contrast of the undrinkable bitter well water at Marah that could not satisfy the thirst, and the water at the Samaritan well that could not satisfy the thirst. It is only the Living Water that can quench our thirst.

Lastly, this text shows the time has arrived for people to experience God in a more personal, authentic and truthful way. Orthodox religious activity has failed the generations. God is not looking for someone to worship him in a building structure, on a certain piece of land, a denomination, an organization, or to worship him out of tradition. God is looking for someone that wants a relationship with him, and will honor and worship him with authenticity through the spirit and in truth. He's looking for that person that will "present their body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto him" (Romans 12:1). This text will contribute to the final project concerning how traditions provide wonderful opportunities to honor the past; however, traditions and customs should not get

in the way of true authentic worship because they can hinder a life enriching experience and relationship with God.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The idea of change can be intimidating, whether it is on a sudden or gradual scale. However, change can also be incredibly exciting, allowing someone to move towards and obtain his or her fullest potential. Sometimes when things are not working out the way you have intended, or perhaps you have outgrown the place you have occupied as long as your mind can remember, it may be time for a change or trying something different. That place could be a position or opinion you have held, a mindset you have learned, or a tradition or custom that have been passed down to you from generations. If things are stagnant, productivity is down, morale is low, or there is no growth, no excitement or no life in the things you are involved in. It is time to do something different or change your attitude.

Change is inevitable. There are few things in life that are guaranteed. We have heard of taxes and death to be among the few. Well, change is a member of that small family as well. You can be assured that if something is not changing, it is dying. The businesses in the world continually need to change and transform to stay competitive. The Apple Corporation for example was originally a computer company which now makes most of its revenue from iTunes, mobile phones, and application downloads. Also, Hewlett Packard, a scientific equipment company, is now one of the biggest providers

of quality printers.¹ If these companies do not constantly monitor every aspect of their organization and make continual changes and adjustments as necessary to meet the needs of their customers, they will go out of business. Dr. Maya Angelo says “If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.”²

The idea of change does not escape the religious community. CNN's website recently led with the headline, Millennials Leaving Church in Doves, Study Finds. “We've known that the religiously unaffiliated has been growing for decades,” said the lead researcher on the new Pew Research Center report. “But the pace at which they've continued to grow is really astounding.”³ There are at least five reasons why churches are dying and declining at such a rapid rate:

1. Cultural Christianity is declining rapidly. It is really a misnomer to call it “cultural Christianity,” since it's not true faith in Christ. In the past, many people felt it was culturally, economically, or politically advantageous to be a part of a congregation, even if they weren't true believers in Christ. These attending non-believers padded our numbers. Or to say it another way, the pool of willing attenders has diminished greatly.
2. The exit of the Builder generation. The Builder generation has kept many churches alive, even if the congregations are on life support. This generation, born before 1946, is fiercely loyal to institutions, including local churches. They stuck with congregations in good and bad times. But, in 2015, there were only 28 million Builders left. Another 13,000 Builders die every week. The loyal generation is few in number and will soon be no more.
3. Migration from rural areas and small towns to the cities. In 1790, only 5% of Americans lived in cities. By the 1960s, the percentage of Americans in cities skyrocketed to 65%. Today over 80% of Americans are city dwellers. Rural and small-town churches held on tenaciously to their members for over two centuries. But the population base for those tenacious churches has dwindled

¹ “Change Is Inevitable, Be Prepared for It,” Integral Development, accessed December 1, 2016, <https://www.integral.org.au/change-is-inevitable-be-prepared-for-it>.

² “Maya Angelou - BrainyQuote,” BrainyQuote, accessed December 1, 2016, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mayaangelo101310.html?src=t_change.

³ Philip Yancey, “Why is Church Failing Millennials,” Faith Gateway, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.faithgateway.com/why-is-church-failing-millennials/#.WHMPDbGZMQ8>.

dramatically.

4. Faster church transfers. Those who are transferring from one church to another are concentrating in fewer churches. Simply stated, a few churches are getting bigger at the expense of smaller churches. While that phenomenon has been in play for quite a while, it is now accelerating. The old barriers that held people in specific churches – family connections, denominational loyalty, and loyalty to a specific congregation – are no longer barriers today. People move with great freedom from church to church.
5. Slow response to change as change accelerates all around us. Many churches are incredibly slow to change. For most of our American history, the pace of cultural and technological change was sufficiently paced for churches to lag only five to ten years. Now churches are lagging 20 and 30 years as the pace of change increases dramatically. To many attendees and members, the church thus seems increasingly irrelevant. To be clear, I am speaking about issues of style, methodology, and awareness, not changing doctrine or biblical truths. A church guest I recently interviewed said it clearly: “I stuck with my parents’ church as long as I could. But when we had a big blow up over projection screens in the worship center, I had enough.”⁴

The present context directly relates to the contents of the aforementioned paragraphs and the pages to come in the historical foundations chapter. It is a rural church now experiencing the pain and agony of overdue change. It is a church that can be compared to a jewel kept locked away in a velvet lined box, and no one has been allowed to open it. When the velvet lined box was finally open, instead of coming out of the box to be exposed so everyone could see its beauty, the jewel was comfortable inside the box and did not want to come out so others could see her beauty. Staying locked in the velvet lined box has caused the jewel to drop in value. It has become tarnished and does not appraise for what it appears to be worth because of her unwillingness to change or adapt to what is outside of the velvet box. Plainly stated, the church has been groomed, and has the capability to do a great work in the vineyard of Christ within and beyond the

⁴ Amy Thompson, “Five Reasons Churches are Dying, Declining, Faster Today,” Thom Rainer, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://thomrainer.com/2016/09/five-reasons-churches-dying-declining-faster-today/>.

community; however, it is so deeply ingrained in its traditions, customs and own security, it is unwilling to change or adapt to anything new. As a result, there has been no growth, no motivation, and no excitement in the church as membership continues to decline.

Author Gerald Bray talks about traditions in the life of the church. He says “Any challenge to the existing order of things starts from the assumption that something must be wrong with it, and the defenders of the status quo usually find it all too easy to reply that the existing order must not be tampered with because ‘things have always been done this way’.”⁵ This is a phenomenon which repeats itself every time something new is proposed, and there will always be those who will leap to the defense of ‘tradition’ in order to thwart the process of change.⁶

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Martin Luther’s early years, his middle years, and his later years. This chapter will be finalized by a conclusion that will address how this chapter relates to the context and accentuate areas in my context that are similar to some of the challenges Luther experienced with the Catholic Church in relation to addressing his Ninety-Five Theses.

Main Body

The sixteenth century was filled with spectacular events. In 1503, the Canterbury Cathedral was completed after 433 years of construction. That is almost just as long as the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt! The year 1503 is also the same year Leonardo Da Vinci began painting the Mona Lisa completing it in four years. In 1504, Michelangelo

⁵ Gerald Bray, “Scripture and Tradition in Reformation Thought,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 19, no. 2 (April 1995): 157-166.

⁶ Bray, “Scripture and Tradition in Reformation Thought,” 157-166.

began carving a lifelike figure of King David. In 1531, Halley's Comet made its first recognized appearance. In 1533, Queen Elizabeth I was born. In 1563, the plague outbreak hit England. In 1564, William Shakespeare was born. In 1582, the Gregorian calendar was first introduced and in 1595, Romeo and Juliet was first performed. Despite all these other countless accomplishments in art, literature, and science, it is said when historians discussed the sixteenth century, Martin Luther stood above all the rest.⁷

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. The town near the province of Saxony-Anhalt at the heart of the Holy Roman Empire. In the summer of 1484, Martin's family moved to the region of Mansfeld and it was there he spent most of his childhood. At four and one-half years of age, Martin had to be enrolled in school. Day in and day out without vacation, school kept him occupied. Even on Sundays, school obligations had to be met because school children were required to sing at worship services. "Whoever could afford to pay the tuition thought it necessary to send his children to school as soon as possible not only so they could learn early but also it kept them out of the way at home with they were too young to work."⁸

Martin's father trained as a copper-miner. Ambitious, hard-working, impulsively outspoken, he has a place of his own in the story of Luther's earlier life. The copper mines were deep into the mountains and dangerous. Constant worry of the mine collapsing and exploding and the danger of injury and death was always a concern. "Miners would put their trust in the mother of the Virgin Mary, St. Anne, for it was said

⁷ David Whitford, *Luther: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T and T Clark International, 2011), 3-4.

⁸ Gerhard Brendler, *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1991), 25.

that she never greeted her supplicants with empty hands but always brought “mighty goods and money.” It was she who watched over miner’s health and well-being.⁹ He was short of stature, solid and strong, resolute and gifted with an unusual amount of common sense and acquired a fair competency. “He was known as Big Hans to distinguish him from his brother Little Hans. This was a desirable distinction since even in the rough society Little Hans became notorious as a tavern-brawler.”¹⁰ Hans, his father was able to become a shareholder in the mining company and a respected member of one in the community.

Luther came from a large family of four boys and four girls and they were a very disciplined family fighting its way upwards in a hard world.¹¹ Martin’s parents were persevering, industrious and hard-working people. He recalls his mother in the early days in Mansfeld carrying wood on her back from the forest and that she had loved to sing songs saying “If folks are not kind to thee or me, the fault perhaps with us maybe.”¹² Young Martin’s home was a home where every penny counted, and where corporal punishment was employed to discourage disobedience. “Once when Martin took a nut without permission his mother struck him so hard that his nose bled. His father once whipped him so severely that he harbored a grudge against his father and avoided him for days.”¹³

⁹ James Reston, *Luther’s Fortress* (New York, NY: Basic Press, 2015), 1.

¹⁰ A. G. Dickens, *Martin Luther and the Reformation* (London, UK: University of London, 1967), 1.

¹¹ Dickens, *Martin Luther and the Reformation*, 2.

¹² Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 24.

¹³ Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 24.

Martin attended the Mansfeld Latin School for approximately nine years, learning first to read and write. Reading taught him an elementary Latin vocabulary which was immediately required to use to the fullest extent possible. If a pupil employed German for words that he already should have learned in Latin, he was punished. One day Luther was given fifteen strokes with a cane because he was unable to decline a Latin noun that the teacher had not yet taught him. Whipping was part of the pedagogical system. This was primitive but effective in training pupils to be submissive and at the same time goal oriented: a pedagogy based on corporal punishment, apprehending offenders, forcing submission, and encouraging informing.¹⁴ The curriculum was based primarily on rote learning and was designed to train memory. For rules of grammar there were memory verses, prayers, poems, fables and quotations from the work of the great Latin writers. “The lessons included nothing about German history or literature: the study of history was confined to biblical and Roman history. Language, literature, and history from which the pupils could select examples, models and ideals whereby they could sharpen their thinking and feeling, create for themselves a subjective world of values and thus develop their own personalities.”¹⁵ Martin was said to be a cherry boy, fond of singing, in love with music, and skillful in playing the flute.

Up until he was fourteen years old, Martin spent the most beautiful hours of each day in the classroom. He was then met with the same fate that his father had confronted in growing up. As the eldest of the children he was the first to go out into the world leaving home. His father Hans and mother Margarethe was ambitious for their son. They

¹⁴ Brendler, *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution*, 25.

¹⁵ Brendler, *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution*, 25.

decided Martin should study law in Erfurt. His father knew that mining was a tough business and wanted his promising son to have better and become a lawyer.¹⁶ To study jurisprudence and become a master if not a doctor in both legal codes, Roman which applied to imperial and civic life and canon law which applied to the church, was to aspire to positions of influential leadership in society, to create for oneself the possibility of admittance to higher public office, to influence policy, possess power, and be in a position to exercise it. ‘The study of law provided the opportunity to receive recognition for oneself and for one’s class, and it afforded the opportunity advance one’s offspring as well as to boost friends up the social ladder.’¹⁷ They saved enough money to send Martin to the university.

In 1501, he matriculated in the traditional course in the arts at the oldest and most renowned university in Germany at Erfurt. As a student, he was known as a great communicator, earning the nickname “the Philosopher.” In 1505, “he received his degree and then much to the satisfaction of his father, Martin began a graduate course in the law.”¹⁸ On July 2, 1505 during a long sojourn in the countryside, Luther now twenty-one was caught in a ferocious thunderstorm on a back road near the village of Storrernheim. Terrified and cowering beneath a tree, he cried out for deliverance to St. Anne, as the copper miners had always done, and spontaneously proclaimed that if he survived the storm, he would become a monk. When he told his father of his decision, he was furious at his son for abandoning his legal career, at least without consulting him first. Later,

¹⁶ “Martin Luther,” Biography, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-9389283#synopsis>.

¹⁷ Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 29.

¹⁸ Reston, *Luther’s Fortress*, 3.

Luther would question whether his vow was sincere. In an essay in 1521 entitled “Concerning Monastic Vows,” he wrote, “I did not freely or desirously become a monk, but walled around with terror and agony of sudden death, I vowed a constrained and necessary oath. Selling all his books, he entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt twelve days after the Storrernheim thunderstorm. According to canon law a vow taken under such circumstances was not binding. It was indeed questionable whether such a terrified cry of anguish could be certified as a vow. Thus, neither by conscience nor by law was Luther obliged to enter a monastery.¹⁹ Whatever his motive, on July 17, 1505, Martin Luther knocked on the door of the Erfurt Augustinian monastery and was admitted. At first, he was received as a guest in order that he might be observed as to his sincerity.²⁰ Next he was assigned to a monk responsible for guiding him through his novitiate.

Martin Luther’s Middle Years

For the next six years Luther live under strict rules of the Augustinian Order. There, as time passed, he began to develop his suspicions.²¹ He did not find the religious enlightenment he was seeking. He came away more disillusioned, discouraged, depressed by the immorality and corruption he witnessed there among the Catholic priests.²² A mentor conveyed to focus his life exclusively on Christ and this would later provide him

¹⁹ Brendler, *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution*, 33.

²⁰ Brendler, *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution*, 34.

²¹ Reston, *Luther’s Fortress*, 3.

²² “Spiritual Anguish and Enlightenment,” Biography, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-9389283#spiritual-anguish-and-enlightenment>.

with the guidance he sought. His counselor during his novitiate was “a fine old gentleman,” and he was responsible for introducing Luther to the domestic routine of the Augustinian Order: no laughing; walking with bowed head and measured step; focusing straight ahead and not glancing about speaking to other monks only in the presence of the prior or the novice mentor; drinking only while seated and holding the cup in both hands; being silent in the church, the corridors, the dining hall, and the sleeping cubicles. It was mandatory for monks to recite together daily in the church the Divine Office, a sequence of prayers, psalms, hymns, and reading spaced throughout the day at specified hours and contained in a book called a breviary.²³ Luther was extraordinarily successful as a monk. “He plunged into prayer, fasting, and ascetic practices—going without sleep, enduring bone-chilling cold without a blanket, and flagellating himself. As he later commented, “If anyone could have earned heaven by the life of a monk, it was I.”²⁴

Luther’s novitiate ended one late summer morning in September of 1506 when he made solemn vows that were required for full admittance to the monastic order. “After prayers a traditional hymn was sung during which he was vested with the white tunic, scapular and cape and a black cow led cotta. The period of menial service was now over for Brother Martin because a monk holding a master of arts degree, as Luther did, would not be employed by his order, like the lay brothers, merely to execute the daily chores at monastery.”²⁵ A priest, such as Luther, could be of much greater service to the order. “Thus Luther, at the direction of his order, began to climb a new ladder; not an academic

²³ Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 35.

²⁴ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 34.

²⁵ Derek Wilson, *Out of the Storm* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), 49.

one but rather one which ascended into the ecclesiastical hierarchy.”²⁶ This new ladder was discernible by ordinations. Over the next six months he was admitted to each of the minor orders and was finally made priest. “The ordination of the priest was regarded as a transmission of the special power and spiritual authority which Jesus Christ had bestowed on his apostles.”²⁷ After his ordination in April 1507, he came under the paternal guidance of the vicar general of the Augustinian order, Johann von Staupitz. He admired Luther’s gifts but worried about his ward’s crippling doubts and insecurities. And so the superior took Luther under his wing as the young priest’s confessor. Occasionally, these regular sessions would last many hours. Feeling that academic work might be beneficial and provide a healthy distraction from Luther’s introspection, von Staupitz encouraged Luther to turn in that direction.

In 1512 Luther received his doctorate, and as a courtesy, von Staupitz stepped down from his chair in biblical theology at the new university at Wittenberg and gave it to Luther. In the coming few years Luther devoted himself internal debates over the challenge of humanism and to writing essays on the fine points of scriptural doctrine. Luther’s Wittenberg lectures were extremely important since they provided genuine contemporary evidence on the unfolding of his thought process. Through his studies of scripture, Martin Luther finally gained religious enlightenment. “Beginning in 1513, while preparing lectures, Luther read the first line of Psalm 22, which Christ wailed in his cry for mercy on the cross, a cry similar to Luther’s own disillusionment with God and

²⁶ Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 36.

²⁷ Brendler, *Martin Luther, Theology and Revolution*, 37.

religion.”²⁸ He taught four complete courses on the Psalms, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. In addition, some important clues appeared in certain sermons written during these same years and a second, uncompleted course on Psalms. Luther’s life saw the gradual fashioning of his doctrine of justification by faith alone, the key doctrine around which the Protestant Reformation was to turn.²⁹ In 1514 he assumed the position of minister in Wittenberg’s town church, where he became a popular preacher, especially for his ability to explain biblical stories in the simple parlance of the people. “Yet, even as Luther assumed greater responsibilities within the Roman Catholic Church, his alienation from the Vatican grew thanks largely to the Leo X, who became Pope after death of Julius II.”³⁰

In 1513, Leo X became the first Pope who hailed from the House of Medici. They attained their extraordinary wealth and political power in Florence in the 13th century through the success of commerce and banking.³¹ Pope Leo X was a controversial figure who styled himself as a king, and his excesses would, in time, shape Luther’s opposition to the church. He was a man of average height, large head, full face, and snow-white hands. His gluttony was well-known, and the pope’s corpulence and heftiness was on display. Pope Leo brought to Rome the Medici focus on art, science, and literature. He had a particular interest in the classics and antiquities. Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino was

²⁸ “Spiritual Anguish and Enlightenment,” accessed December 17, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-9389283#spiritual-anguish-and-enlightenment>.

²⁹ Dickens, *Martin Luther and the Reformation*, 22.

³⁰ Reston, *Luther’s Fortress*, 4.

³¹ “Medicine – Family,” History, accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.history.com/topics/medici-family#section_1.

his most important ward, and Raphael's paintings, even more than those of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci defined the splendor of the so-called Leonine era. Raphael painted the famous walls of the pope's private library, bedroom, and ceremonial space for signing documents. Raphael completed the tapestries depicting the acts of St. Peter and St. Paul. Pope Leo X commissioned these masterworks to hand in the Sistine Chapel. In 1515 Pope Leo put Raphael in charge of the building of the new St. Peter's Cathedral.³²

Nepotism also flourished under Pope Leo. After ascending to the papacy, he appointed two of his kinsmen, Giulio di Medici, age twenty, and Giovanni Angelo do Medici, age fourteen, as cardinals.³³ Rome welcomed the focus on the good life that Pope Leo brought to the city. It was reported that upon his accession to the papal throne, Leo remarked, "Since God had given us the papacy, let us enjoy it." He was a fine musician, and said to possess a pleasant voice, as well as an open and generous manner and lusty sense of fun. Leo was well-known for his refinement and charm and he delighted in vulgar street comedies. "All of this pleasure in profane amusements caked into question his piety and labeled him as a humanist pope. It is believed he was agnostic."³⁴

Among Leo's extravagant eccentricities was his attachment to a pet white elephant, two exotic leopards and a Persian stallion. Inevitably, the extravagance of Leo's luxurious lifestyle taxed the Vatican's resources. To make matters worse, France invaded Italy in 1515, taking possession of Milan and threatening the independence of the papal dominion in central Italy. Within two years the Vatican's savings were squandered. How

³² Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 5.

³³ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 5.

³⁴ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 6.

was Leo to wage war, and finance Raphael's work and the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral, stage his lavish banquet and offer undiscerning donations to artistic flatterers? He turned increasingly to bankers, borrowing enormous sums of funds at forty percent interest.³⁵ To address his deficits, Leo X turned to the dubious practice of selling cardinalates and archbishoprics for enormous prices. On July 31, 1517, he created thirty-one new cardinals and received 300,000 ducats (around 50 million in today's US dollars) for the appointments. The beneficiaries who bought these expensive offices had to borrow from financiers and donors, large and small, where ever they could be found. Leo sold the archbishopric of Mainz Germany for 21,000 gold ducats (about 3.5 million US dollars).³⁶ "To raise this enormous sum, the young Albrecht of Brandenburg had to borrow from the most powerful banking institution in Germany, the House of Fugger. Albrecht received permission from the Vatican to repay the banker by the sale of a clever dispensation call indulgences."³⁷

An indulgence was a form of spiritual relief for the sins of murder, polygamy, sacrilege, stealing, theft, perjury, and witchcraft. For a hefty sum, the sinner could reduce or eliminate the number of years to be spent in purgatory through papal forgiveness. By purchasing an indulgence, the miscreant purportedly showed his true repentance. The gift could apply to the sins of the dead as well as the living and to those of the poor as well as the rich. Leo justified the practice of selling indulgences by arguing that a pope could remit the guilt, forgive sin, and moderate the punishment of the sinner though the "power

³⁵ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 7.

³⁶ Dickens, *Martin Luther and the Reformation*, 33.

³⁷ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 7.

of the keys.” The keys referring to the interchange between Christ and Simon Peter when Christ says, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19). The symbol of Vatican City itself contains crossed keys- the keys to heaven given to Peter, the first pope, by Christ.³⁸

Martin Luther gradually came into conflict with the church over the questions of indulgences. In March 1515, Leo X authorized the use of indulgences not only for the reconstruction of St. Peter Cathedral, but to stop Saxon money from leaving the country and to protect the profits of his own shrines. In 1517, Dominican Johann Tetzel, a distinguished German preacher who had engaged on this type of mission in 1502 was recruited by Albrecht as a chief fundraiser to promote indulgences to help with the erection of St. Peter’s Church. As Tetzel approached the little townships preceded by his cross and the papal banner, he was received with flags, bells and organ recitals. For the more critical observers the spectacle was marred by the presence of the Fugger accountant, ever recording and dispatching the large sums collected from the pious. The mantra of the indulgence hawker survives: “As soon as the gold in the casket rings The rescued soul to heaven springs.”³⁹

Tetzel would set up his pulpit, the tables of his clerks staked with the bundles of impressive parchment certificates and the all-important ready to receive the payments of the gullible. As soon as enough people had gathered, he would start to preach. He

³⁸ Reston, *Luther’s Fortress*, 8.

³⁹ Dickens, *Martin Luther and the Reformation*, 33.

appealed to his listeners' self-interest. Tetzel urged them to reflect on the peril in which their immortal souls were mired by their sins. How could they hope to escape the just penalty demanded by a holy God? They were doomed to suffer for decades, centuries, perhaps millennia the pains of purgatory. Indeed, they might never reach their ardently desired heaven at all. Tetzel's subtle propaganda did not end there; he also preyed on his hearers' guilt saying, "have mercy on your dead parents." He said from their graves, their fathers and mothers were imploring, "Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance. We bore you, nourished you, brought you up, and left you our fortunes. Will you let us lie here in flames?"⁴⁰

Indulgences were not new; after all, they had been around for centuries and had occasionally provoked disquiet among theologians. What was so special about the 1517 indulgences and why did Luther's reaction lead to the sundering of Europe into rival camps? It was Tetzel's exposing a practice bereft of theological justification. Once exposed, it became obvious that what was at stake was not the practice itself, but the authority which sanctioned it. Luther did not set out to attack that authority and was genuinely surprised by the storm that his initial reaction whistled up.⁴¹ His initial outburst of anger was directed to the sale of indulgences as vitiating the orderly care of souls through penance. Despite abuses, his concerned was to reform and retain penance, not abolish it. Luther's most radical statement was that "Christ has given to every one of his

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 89, 90.

⁴¹ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 91.

believers the power to absolve even open sins,” thereby breaking every clerical monopoly of the sacrament.⁴²

What became the Roman Catholic Church answered this question in one way, while Luther and his imitators answered it in other ways. Among the Protestants, as the Reformers came to be called, two opposing tendencies were evident from the beginning. On the one hand, there were the ‘conservatives’ who basically wanted to purify the church according to Scripture, but who believed that that could be done quite adequately with only minimal violence to existing practices and customs. On the other hand, there were the ‘radicals’, who thought that all traditions were by definition corruptions, and ought to be discarded in favor of a church order based exclusively on the clear testimony of scripture.⁴³

On October 31, 1517, an angry Martin Luther nailed a sheet of paper with Ninety-Five theses on the university’s chapel door. Though he intended these to be discussion points, the Ninety-Five Theses laid out a devastating critique of the indulgences as corrupting people’s faith. Luther also sent a copy to Archbishop Albert Albrecht of Mainz, calling on him to end the sale of indulgences. Aided by the printing press, copies of the Ninety-Five Theses spread throughout Germany within two weeks and throughout Europe within two months.⁴⁴ At first, Albrecht planned on ignoring Luther’s letter. He sent a copy to the Vatican and Pope Leo initially shared Albrecht’s impulse to ignore the

⁴² Mary Gerhart and Fabian Udoh, *The Christianity Reader* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 382.

⁴³ Bray, “Scripture and Tradition in Reformation Thought,” 157-166.

⁴⁴ “Spiritual Anguish and Enlightenment,” accessed December 17, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-9389283#spiritual-anguish-and-enlightenment>.

document. That impulse did not last long as Pope Leo turned to the official papal theologian (called the Master of the Sacred Palace), also named Prierias. He was a staunch defender of papal authority. He immediately recognized the implied and direct threats to papal dignity in the Theses and responded against Martin. Luther and Prierias held their positions strong. Where Luther wrote against the power of indulgences, Prierias discussed the power of the pope.⁴⁵ “He proposed to reduce the number of cardinals and to insist that the pope paid for them himself and drew attention to what the German diet had already identified as a blatant abuse of the collection of papal taxes.”⁴⁶

For Luther, there was a distinction to be made between the two. For Prierias, they were synonymous. Prierias began the Dialogue with four “Fundamental Principles.” The first noted the universal church was synonymous with the Roman church and the pope was the head of the church. Second, the pope is unable to err when the discerning sacred doctrine. Third, whoever disagrees with either principle one or two is a heretic. Finally, in a direct confrontation to Luther, Prierias writes, He who says regarding indulgences that the Church cannot do what she does is a heretic. Prierias’s Dialogue was then put together with a summons to appear in Rome within sixty days of its receipt.

Luther received both documents on August 7, 1518. By that time, Rome had already decided that Luther had denied the power of indulgences and therefore was a heretic. A letter was sent to the papal legate telling him to have Luther detained. Once detained, he was arrested for heresy, he to be transferred to Rome, tried, and then burned

⁴⁵ Whitford, *Luther*, 31.

⁴⁶ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 145.

at the stake. This did not happen because of imperial politics or the Diet of Worms.⁴⁷ Luther was called to an assembly at Worms, Germany, to appear before Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. When the news arrived in Rome that Luther was to be heard at the Diet of Worms or general assembly, there was great distress. The people crowded the streets to the Episcopal Court where the Diet was in session.⁴⁸ Luther being an experienced preacher, orator and debater, this would give him the pulpit he craved. Luther arrived prepared for another debate; he quickly discovered it was a trial at which he was asked to recant his views. Luther replied, "Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds of reasoning ... then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience." Then he added, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen. For Luther the Bible was the philosophers' stone which alone could transform the base metal of worthless medieval religion into the gold of true faith. And he was passionately concerned that Charles should understand that it was only his total commitment to sacred injunction which was the core if his argument with Rome."⁴⁹

It remained only for Charles formally to state the ban and insist on the enforcement for the Luther affair to be brought to a fatal conclusion, so one might think. Others were also adept at political maneuvering. When Charles, the following morning, declared that he expected all Germany's rulers to cooperate with himself and the pope by ensuring that Luther was arrested, the electors and princes sent a deputation urging

⁴⁷ Whitford, *Luther*, 31.

⁴⁸ Gustav Freytag, *Martin Luther* (New York, NY: AMS Press, Inc., 1972), 50.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 174.

compromise. Reluctantly, the emperor agreed to an in-camera debate between Luther and a group of theologians. This took place and, of course, nothing was settled. The emperor was fumed at the continued delay and at Charles' determination to allow the heretical monk to return to Wittenberg under safe conduct. Luther certainly did escape to continue his arrogant defiance of Rome. Luther left the Worms with a protective guard of twenty horsemen, under the impressive leadership of the imperial herald.⁵⁰ Once out of view of the party, Luther's captors united him with supporters and allowed him to get on a horse. That night he rode into his own "Mighty Fortress" the Wartburg.⁵¹ By the time an imperial edict calling Luther "a convicted heretic" was issued, he had escaped to Wartburg Castle, where he hid for ten months.⁵²

The stay in the Wartburg Fortress was uneasy but very productive. He was quartered in a small room above the fortress's chief who not only cared for Luther's well-being but also saw to it that he remained in the fortress safely secreted from the world. Luther disguised his appearance by growing out his hair and growing a beard. He refers to this time as his "kingdom of the birds," and his own Patmos. Luther used this time in exile to begin translating the New Testament from the Greek.⁵³

Between October 1517 and late 1520, Luther's conflict with Rome widened, and his positions hardened. The Reformer boldly challenged the most sacrosanct rituals of Catholic faith. He questioned the validity of Catholicism's seven sacraments, including

⁵⁰ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 174.

⁵¹ Whitford, *Luther*, 44.

⁵² Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, 35.

⁵³ Whitford, *Luther*, 45.

marriage and extreme unction. Luther was shaking the very foundations of the Roman church, not only in contesting its core beliefs, but also in questioning its political power in the world. Luther makes a frontal assault on the acclaim that only the Church-i.e. the priesthood – is the repository of divine truth and that the pope alone can correctly interpret Scripture. If that is the case, he argues, why bother with the Bible at all? “Let us burn the Scriptures and be satisfied with the unlearned gentlemen at Rome who possess the Holy Spirit!”⁵⁴

According to Luther’s understanding of Scripture, there were only three sacraments, not the traditional seven, and the three that remained were distorted by bad theology aimed at enhancing the prestige of the officiant and not at helping the recipient. He argued that confirmation, ordination, marriage and extreme unction did not fall within the category of dominical.

Having demonstrated how clergy abused the non-sacraments, Luther went for the Catholic jugular, challenging the doctrine of the mass had defined three hundred years earlier at the fourth Lateran Council (2115). The Lord’s Supper had been ordained as a mystery in which Christ me all believers, but the clergy had taken sole possession of it. The Church claimed what was little better than a ‘magical’ power in making God at the altar. They demanded that congregations believed the Aristotelian nonsense of transubstantiation. And worst of all, they claimed to be re-enacting the sacrifice of Calvary at every celebration.⁵⁵

His books were to be burned-not an inconsiderable task, since between 1518 and 1520 Luther’s writing had become so prolific that the number of his published titles grew from 150 to 570. On January 3, 1521, Leo X published a reaffirmation of Luther’s excommunication and word spread widely throughout Germany. All areas that supported the rebellion were put under interdict, meaning the priests there could not offer the sacraments of the church, including the Eucharist, baptism, or extreme unction.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 144.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 148.

⁵⁶ Reston, *Luther's Fortress* 15.

The Latter Years of Martin Luther

In Late 1522, after his return from the Wartburg, Luther had addressed marriage directly in a sermon called “Increasing and Multiply,” taking his text from Genesis 1:28; “God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” “He who resolves to remain single let him give up the name of human being. Let him prove that he is an angel or a spirit.”⁵⁷ In early 1523 twelve apostate Cistercian nuns, most of them from noble families, escaped the rigors of their Nimbischen convent on a Good Friday by hiding in empty herring barrels. Nine of them made their way to Wittenberg, where they were sequestered by Luther and his colleagues. Luther’s writing had inspired them, and it eventually came out that Luther himself had planned their escape. Among the runaway nuns was Katharina von Bora, who came from a family of landed gentry.

On June 13, 1525 in a private ceremony in Wittenberg, Luther married her. Given its high visibility, his marriage was an extraordinarily offensive act. It was done not out of love initially but rather as an expression of inward completion, as relief for the guilt he felt as a monk over sexual temptation, and as a natural consequence of his thought. His marriage caused a great sensation. Catholics considered his betrothal to be a sacrilege and heresy committed by his own body. Not only that, Luther as a monk and Katharina as nun were engaging in incest, the Roman church believed. Luther responded to the criticism characteristically. His wedding song was from Corinthians: “To avoid fornication, let

⁵⁷ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 222.

every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2).⁵⁸ Luther would have six children by Katharina von Bora, and the family would take over the Black Cloister, the former Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg, as its home.

Luther was faced with the problem that faces all radical reformers, whether religious or secular: the limitations of liberty. He had freed people from the shackles of priestly domination by making available to them the ‘pure gospel’. What he could not come to terms with was the phenomenon of other teachers using his own exegetical methods and reaching different conclusions.⁵⁹ No longer did he face ever-present danger as he had in the period leading up to the Diet of Worms. Instead, he had to cope with novel experiences – uncertainty and the deprivation of daily routine. He returned the cloister and was, once again, an Augustinian friar. Off came the Junker George’s beard; back came the tonsure. The numbers in the Wittenberg convent were steadily dwindling as, one by one, his brethren abandoned their vows. Monasticism was dying but it offered the only structure for life that Luther knew. Materially he was now less well provided for than he had been at Wartburg. His work at the university and pastoral responsibilities were unpaid. For someone who believed firmly as Luther did in vocation, all this was a disorienting experience.⁶⁰

Once Luther settled back into his role as the principal preacher of Wittenberg, and leader of the rapidly spreading continental movement, he turned his mind to bringing his

⁵⁸ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 223.

⁵⁹ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 197.

⁶⁰ Wilson, *Out of the Storm*, 198.

great work at the Wartburg to fruition. He brought home with him several hundred pages that constituted his work of translation. He tasked his chief assistants George Spalatin and Philipp Melanchthon to concentrate on correcting and editing, polishing and proofreading the manuscript.⁶¹ Now, as the production of the translation went forward, its existence remained a closely held secret.

Only his assistants and the president of the university knew about the project.⁶² The Septembertestament, as Luther's first edition of his New Testament translation was to be called, was meant for a mass audience. Printed on paper handmade from cloth rags, measuring six and a half inches by eleven and a half inches, and two inches thick, with 444 pages, it was intended as a family Bible.⁶³

When copies of Luther's New Testament reached Rome, the reaction to its textual alterations was swift and virulent. His translation of Romans 3:23-24 as especially repellent. Catholic scholars pointed out that Paul used the word "faith" more than two hundred times in his Epistles but never coupled it with the word "alone." When furor in Rome over the word "alone" came to Luther's notice some time later, he scoffed.⁶⁴ In 1523 Luther's works were banned including his Bible and in 1525 two men were hanged in Leipzig for distributing Lutheran literature.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 203.

⁶² Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 206.

⁶³ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 211.

⁶⁴ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 215.

⁶⁵ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 231.

Luther began to compose music with the same intensity with which he composed his essays and sermons. Music had been important to him for his early life, extending back to his choir boy days in Eisenach. It was one of four required study areas for all the boys, along with arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. Collaborating with a musician on the melodies, he supplied the powerful lyrics. Some of the lyrics were overtly political. One hymn focused on the execution of two Lutherans in Belgium. Another, written expressly for children, was directed against all his arch-enemies, from the pop to the infidel Turks. The intensity of Luther's experience at the Wartburg surely gave extra meaning to the words of his heroic Reformation anthem. It was inspired by Psalm 46, which Luther had translated as: God is our comfort and our strength, a help in great emergency which we have met.”⁶⁶

Luther had suffered from angina since the late 1520's. Angina is a condition in which the arteries of the heart are clogged, causing a constriction of blood. The pain can be intense, but it is not the same thing as a heart attack in which blood is completely cut off from a part of the heart. On February 1, 1546, while walking to Eisieben to oversee negotiations regarding economic strife in the town, Luther suffered the first of multiple heart attacks he would endure over his last two weeks. After suffering his final heart attack, his assistant Justus Jonas asked him, “Reverend Father, are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in his name?” “Luther answered, “Yes.” He then died. He did not receive Last Rights nor give a final confession of his sins. Instead, he gave a final testament to his faith.”⁶⁷ The

⁶⁶ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 232.

⁶⁷ Whitford, *Luther*, 54.

full Luther Bible with both testaments was finally released in 1532, and it contained sixty-two Cranach illustrations. The number of versions of Luther's Bible that were ultimately sold is nothing short of amazing, and it testifies of the power of both his translation and its message. By the time of Luther's death in 1546 there were 350 editions of his Bible.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Martin Luther had great convictions about what he believed to be the truth in Scripture and how that unadulterated truth needed to reach the people. That truth he believed must be delivered to the people at all cost. His story shows how one's biography plays such an important role on who one will become in the future and how one will often return to his/her beginnings. One such example of this in his life story is when Luther prayed to St. Anne in the thunder storm just as his father did when mining. Other examples are how his early years of mastering Latin helped him to translate the New Testament while in hiding and how he was named the "Philosopher," in school and was a "great debater," which aided him during the "Diet of Worms;" and how Luther returned to his love for music during his final years. It is clear that Luther's tough upbringing as a child and being introduced to education early prepared him for the challenges he was to face in life.

Although Martin saw so many things wrong with the Catholic Church he had no desire to destroy, disrupt or dismantle the establishment. His desire was to work with the Institution for constructive change. Luther's story gives hope in realizing one person with

⁶⁸ Reston, *Luther's Fortress*, 217.

a deep conviction can make a difference and change the course and direction of powerful institutions. In Martin's case, he held the Catholic Church to a standard that they knew, understood, and supposedly followed since the creation of the institution was entrusted to the first Pope Saint Peter when our Lord Jesus told him "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18).

Martin was successful for a few obvious reasons that should be annotated for all Christians, particularly clergy. Martin was very disciplined and stayed under authority, always having a mentor. He knew the Scriptures because he studied them constantly. He stayed in constant prayer always seeking guidance from God and trusting in Him. Finally, Martin always knew that if he stayed faithful to God, He would fight all his battles. Clearly it took more than a physical desire to start a revolution that would change the worship and salvation experience for millions of Christ followers for centuries to come. It took a divine encounter and a burning spiritual conviction that moved a man to risk his life and to be willing to lose it knowing through faith he would be gaining it.

The context is not so daring; however, it is and has been extremely challenging. It is an institution set and embedded in comfortable traditions afraid to change because the fear of something that is unfamiliar. My context is an institution unwilling to relinquish forms of orthodoxy that does not reach new generations through worship, praise, and technology. An institution unwilling to adjust or modify echelons of leadership and stagnant ideas remain and new paradigms are not welcome. An institution that knows the Word, accepts the Word, and supposedly abides by the Word, however when challenged by the Word, that Word seems unfamiliar and foreign.

Recently, across America there has been an up rise in protest against pro-slavery Confederate images and language that at one time was the glorification of a sordid history of racism. Statues of Confederate leaders nationwide have been removed in recent years as communities viewed them as symbols of hate and slavery. South Carolina removed the Confederate flag form statehouse grounds in 2015, after a self-described white supremacist killed nine black churchgoers in Charleston. Since then, a movement to pull Confederate iconography from government and public property has been gathering steam. An analysis in May 2017 by USA Today found more than 700 Confederate monuments in thirty-one states still stand.

A question long debated among historians has become the subject of a national conversation: What should happen to these relics of a bygone era? There is not clear consensus, but most historians agree it's up to individual communities to make decisions that reflect their values. Most communities are agreeing that the monuments should not be destroyed since they can impart important lessons about the ugliness of the past. If the monuments are preserved and moved to a museum, people can choose whether to interact with them. Unlike public spaces like parks, museums are controlled spaces where experience staff members can provide historical context for visitors.

There is a common thread that resonates with Luther's experience, recent racial uprising in America, and my context. When institutions are challenged to uphold what they say they believe, a hostile environment is created and the institution will begin to justify its imperfections. What is the answer? Luther said it best; "I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Then he added, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen."

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The goal in this chapter is to analyze and build on the theological themes and movements in the Old Testament biblical (OT) text Exodus 15:22 – 16:3, and New Testament (NT) text John 4:1-34, and to help construct a theological view that will be relevant to the context and final project. In discussing the theological themes, other biblical passages will be investigated to support the theological views along with other theological issues of relevance. Encompassed in the chapter will be a focus on political, social, economic and tradition issues. The prospective views of classical and modern theologians will be reflected in the chapter also. The chapter will consist of an introduction, main body and conclusion.

The Catholic Church, also known as the Roman Catholic Church, is the largest Christian Church, with more than 1.27 billion members worldwide. As one of the oldest religious institutions in the world, it has played a prominent role in the history of western civilization. There is a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that makes criticism of oppression essential to the task of theology. The forms of oppression to be criticized are mainly social and economic evils.

Headed by the Bishop of Rome, known as the Pope, its doctrines are summarized in the Nicene Creed and is notable within Western Christianity for its sacred traditions

and seven sacraments.¹ Roman Catholicism represents the continuation of the historical organized church as it developed in Western Europe, and its distinctive beliefs include the doctrines of Transubstantiation and Purgatory, and practices include veneration of saints and use of the rosary.²

Originating in Latin America, the theme and movement of liberation theology has held as its main concern the exploitation of the poor, but it also seeks to defend the rights of minority and ethnic groups and to support women's liberation. In the 1960s, liberation theology became a distinctive movement preached that it was not enough for the church to simply empathize and care for the poor. Instead, believers said, the church needed to be a vehicle to push for fundamental political and structural changes that would eradicate poverty. Liberation theology is therefore, a theory of deliverance from the injustices caused to people by the power structures of modern society. It is a new approach to theology, and its leaders urge a reinterpretation of the Christian faith to concentrate on the main task of the church today, to deliver people everywhere from the inhumanity to which they are being subjected, especially by those in political power.³

Liberation theology quickly spread to the Protestant Church in Latin America. Conservative Christians sometimes saw it as undermining the spiritual message of the

¹ JoHannah Reardon, "Small Groups," Nicene and Apostles Creeds, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2008/nicene-and-apostles-creeds.html?paging=off&gclid=CLi2zY-a19ICFVdWDQodUUQDtA>.

² "Roman Catholicism," Patheos, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Roman-Catholicism>.

³ Catholic Culture, "Catholic Dictionary: Liberation Theology," Trinity Communications, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=34583>.

gospel.⁴ Since becoming a North American movement in theology, liberation theology has appealed primarily to people committed to addressing situations of economic, racial and sexual exploitation. In the U.S., liberation theology may be divided into three major streams: (1) white, male liberation theologians (2) feminist liberation theologians, and (3) African-American liberation theologians. In addition to these major streams, the influence of liberation theology can be seen in the writings of Asian-American, Native-American and Hispanic-American church leaders.⁵

Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian Roman Catholic theologian, is considered the founder of liberation theology. In “Liberation and Salvation,” he traces the theological shift from understanding salvation in an otherworldly sense. In a this-worldly sense, union with God means building up this world by embracing all and every aspect of humanity. Gutierrez believes there are great deficiencies in the church and salvation. On the superficial level this might seem surprising, but actually it is what often happens with difficult matters: people are afraid to tackle them. It is taken for granted that they are understood. For example, new edifices are raised on old foundations established in the past on untested assumptions and vague generalities. The moment comes, however, when the whole building totters; this is the time to look again to the foundation. Gutierrez believes the salvation of the whole man is centered upon Christ the Liberator.⁶ Dwight Hopkins concurs in *Down, Up and Over* where he states “Jesus is the Spirit of liberation with us, offers one of the most freeing fruits of all: an emancipated status in this work

⁴ D. G. Reid et al., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

⁵ Reid et al., *Dictionary of Christianity in America*.

⁶ Mary Gerhart and Fabian Udoh, *The Christianity Reader* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 693.

where no other person, place, thing, or situation has absolute supremacy over those suffering.”⁷

The Bible establishes a close link between creation and salvation but the link is based on the historical and liberating experience of the Exodus.⁸ To forget this perspective is to run the risk of merely juxtaposing and comparing these two ideas and therefore losing the rich meaning which this relationship has for understanding the recapitulation and outlining work of Christ. That recapturing work of Christ is found in both the liberation of Israel out of bondage and the liberation of the Samaritan woman at the well and through other narratives in the Word of God.

Main Body

Political Perspective

A good definition of slavery is a person owned as property by another, and the relationship that bound the owner and the slave. Slavery was widespread in the ancient Near East, although the economy was not dependent upon it. By Roman times slavery was so extensive that in the early Christian period one out of every two people was a slave. From at least 3000 B.C. captives in war were the primary source of slaves. Slaves could be purchased locally from other owners, or from foreign traveling merchants who sold slaves along with cloth, bronzeware, and other goods. Joseph was sold by Midianites and Ishmaelite’s to an Egyptian (Gen 37:36; 39:1) in this manner.⁹

⁷ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over* (Minneapolis, IN: Fortress Press, 2000), 223.

⁸ Gerhart and Udoh, *The Christianity Reader*, 693.

⁹ W. A. Elwell and B. J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1971.

Joseph is Jacob's favorite son. He shows his favoritism by making Joseph a princely robe. When Joseph dreams, he sees himself as superior to the rest of his family, and that they bow down before him. The other brothers are angered by Jacob's bias and Joseph's boastings. One day, far from home, the brothers seize Joseph. They strip him of his precious robe and sell him as a slave to some Midianite merchants. Brutally, they stain the costly coat with goat's blood and show it to Jacob. Jacob is heartbroken at the evidence that Joseph is dead. Meanwhile, Joseph is very much alive. He is taken to market in Egypt and sold to Potiphar, who works for Pharaoh.¹⁰

As a slave, the favor of God is with Joseph and God prospers Joseph and he is given command of all of the slaves of Potiphar's house. He is lied on by the wife of Potiphar and does not respond to the advances of Mrs. Potiphar by saying, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything..., and he has put all that he owns in my charge...he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God (Gen 39: 9)?" Potiphar places Joseph in prison and Joseph rose to the same prominence as a prisoner as he did as a slave by interpreting dreams. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams concerning seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and he was rewarded with the favor of the Pharaoh in the palace. Due to the famine, Joseph invites his entire family (Jacob his father, and extended family of about seventy people) to stay in Egypt during the years of famine. In Egypt Joseph, his family and the Israelite people grew, were fruitful and increased greatly.

¹⁰ A. Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 37.

Now times have changed. Jacob and Joseph have been dead for many years and their memory forgotten. Meanwhile, the Egyptians have become anxious at the large number of Israelites in their country. They fear that this powerful minority will cause trouble. The Israelites are trapped in Egypt where they work as slaves. But God calls Moses, who is Hebrew by birth and Egyptian by upbringing, to lead Israel out of slavery.¹¹

The God of Israel proves himself to be greater than all the gods of Egypt. Although the Israelites were slaves, the events of the exodus show that it is the Egyptians who are in spiritual bondage.¹² It is interesting to note how the language of warfare is used to describe the people of God as they leave the land of their captors. It was as an army ready for battle that they left Egypt (Ex 13:18), and like an army who had plundered their foes (Ex 12:36). So eager were the Egyptians to see Israel leave that they paid them to go, giving them silver, gold and clothing. This is important because it explains how they have sufficient material later for constructing the tabernacle but it also shows us who the real captives were in this conflict; not the Children of Israel, to whom God restored all that Egypt had taken from them, but the Egyptians, from whom Israel took so much. This meant freedom for thousands of Israelites. The number of 600,000 men is given in (Ex 12:37), which does not include women and children. In addition, others went with them, as well as cattle and herds (Ex 12:38). The result was spectacular:

¹¹ Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 42.

¹² I. D. Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2006), 50.

430 years of dwelling in Egypt had come to an end through the supernatural intervention of God.¹³

Departure of Israel from Egypt led by Moses is beyond question one of the most pivotal, historical and significant events in the history of the Hebrews. It was a unique demonstration of God's power on behalf of his people, who were working under conditions of forced labor for the Egyptians. So dramatic were the circumstances in which the exodus occurred that they were mentioned frequently in subsequent OT periods. When the Hebrews were oppressed, they looked back to that great historical event and trusted God for their future liberation. From our human vantage point, God's new and unprecedented ways of working may seem surprising, innovative, and open to questions, as they were to Moses. From God's perspective, however, they are in keeping with God's earlier commitments to humanity, to God's people of the old and the new covenants, and to individuals. God does not act capriciously, even if we do not always find it easy to understand how God acts.

The covenant established between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai is the focal point of the covenant tradition in the Old Testament. It was anticipated in the covenant of Abraham and lay behind the covenant of David and the proclamation of the prophets.¹⁴ It may take time and effort to relate God's new "name" to the old "name," meaning the knowledge of God's ways that we have brought along from the past. Yahweh is none other than the God of our ancestors. Christians today must—and are privileged to be able

¹³ Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus*, 51.

¹⁴ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 533.

to—live their lives in the context of covenant. God does not confront us as a strange God, but as the God who is committed to us in covenant promises.¹⁵

He emphasized His desire of making covenants by giving himself selflessly, always making the first move. His desire for a close and binding relationship is encompassed in the word “covenant.” When speaking to Noah, God used the word seven times in nine verses (9:9–17). Again, God used this word ten times with Abraham in twenty verses (17:2–21). God also made a covenant with Abraham’s son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. God remembered this single covenant (made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) when He helped their descendants escape from Egypt (Ex. 2:24). God took the initiative. God wanted Abraham to know that, though He was planning to destroy Sodom, the patriarch’s intercessory prayer was important and God could be influenced by it (Gen. 18). At the times Jacob needed God most, it seemed God was not near, but He was. If God did not reveal himself, there was an overriding purpose. With Abraham, God seemed to be silent for thirteen years, apparently waiting until Abraham knew he had no other recourse in having a child but by trusting in God (16:16; 17:1). God honored the covenant He made with Abraham.¹⁶

The covenant since the time of Abraham had contained a promise of land. Immediately before they entered that land (c. 1250 bc), the covenant vows were renewed with a new generation of Israelites, most of whom had not stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai some forty years earlier.¹⁷ God’s liberation of the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery

¹⁵ W. Janzen, *Exodus* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000), 106–107.

¹⁶ W. G. Williams, *Genesis: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), 15.

¹⁷ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 534.

is a central feature of the Bible; likewise, during the exile, the language of political liberation became normative for describing God's saving purposes for Israel. Liberation from slavery also shaped the social consciousness of the people through laws insisting that Israel translate its own experience into a concern for the poor, the oppressed, the weak, and the enslaved.¹⁸

A dominant theme that resonates throughout the Old Testament is that Yahweh is the God who liberated the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.¹⁹ Freedom from physical, political, and spiritual oppression throughout the Bible is one of God's primary purposes for His people as they are released from all kinds of hardships and ultimately from spiritual bondage. A sense of religious or spiritual liberation is also seen in Psalms 119:45, where liberty is obtained through seeking to obey God's precepts.

Liberation theology is seen throughout the Exodus story in the Old Testament. Israel's oppression in Egypt is the starting base of God's central acts of salvation. It is a limited salvation, consisting of one people's liberation from a specific situation of political and economic hardship.²⁰ It includes God's liberation of all human beings at all times and from all powers that enslave them. It is total salvation from the grip of the powers of evil (Satan), toward eternal life with God. Nevertheless, we should not limit Israel's salvation from Egypt to a purely external liberation; its goal is communion with God.²¹ At the same time, it is often one-sided in its emphasis on political and economic

¹⁸ J. M. Bassler, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011), 558.

¹⁹ S. Arnold, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1034.

²⁰ Janzen, *Exodus*, 40.

²¹ Janzen, *Exodus*, 40.

liberation, sometimes—not always—neglecting the enslavement of humans to spiritual powers. George V. Pixley, for example, in his commentary *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective*, argues that the struggle of the enslaved Hebrews against Pharaoh was originally a class struggle of the oppressed lower classes against Pharaoh and his upper-class associates. Only after Israel had become a monarchy, claims Pixley, was the story rewritten to make it refer to a national struggle of Israelites versus Egyptians.²²

The salient features of liberation theology are (1) a preferential option for the poor, that is the idea that the church's primary duty in a situation of oppression is to support the poor; (2) liberation is regarded as an essential element in salvation, since salvation is concerned with the whole man and not just his spiritual needs; (3) the exodus is taken as the biblical paradigm, since individual salvation can come only through social transformation; and (4) a political reading of the Gospels, with an emphasis on Christ's confrontation with unjust social structures, now reflecting developments in North American and European biblical scholarship.²³

Throughout church history, Christians have tended to see the Old Testaments central story of salvation, told in Exodus, as having limited value in itself. It was appreciated as a limited pointer to the true and full salvation yet to be revealed in Jesus Christ.²⁴ While God seemed to be concerned for the hardworking slave laborers oppressed by an unjust ruler in those ancient times, through the New Testament, God is

²² Janzen, *Exodus*, 42.

²³ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 983.

²⁴ Janzen, *Exodus*, 40, 41.

actually not so worried about political and economic oppression. God's real concern is our captivity to our sins, and God's real intention is to save us from that.

God's power and love are all meshed into a supreme entity that has the power to set at liberty those who are downtrodden and oppressed. Warren Stewart Sr., a pastor and author, suggests that the liberating power of God is for everyone. The oppressors are also oppressed and need to be liberated from the will to dominate others. Stewart says, however, this liberating quality of God does imply that every person or group that professes to believe in the God of the Christian faith must recognize the need for liberation whether on a personal, social, or communal level. This can only be done through the process of continuous self-examination and interaction with members of the oppressed as well as the oppressors. "God must be approached as a liberator by us who are bound by our cultural differences, acquired prejudices, handed-down traditions, and propensity toward homogeneity. Each of us who is assigned to interpret the Word of God ... must first be liberated by the God of liberation."²⁵

At various times in church history, oppressed groups have applied Israel's exodus experience to themselves; we need only think of spirituals sung by American black slaves, such as "Go down, Moses ... tell old Pharaoh, 'Let my people go.'"²⁶ Songs were a powerful source of celebration. Spirituals, made famous by the likes of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Mahalia Jackson, and Aretha Franklin are known world over for their beauty, simplicity, depth, power, and assurance

²⁵ J. H. Harris, *Preaching Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 24-25.

²⁶ Janzen, *Exodus*, 41.

of grace. The spiritual song is the creative, imagination, and celebrative response of the slave to the degradation of slavery.

James Harris, pastor and author of *Preaching Liberation* suggests also that in our preaching we can indeed tell the truth of scripture and tradition, which is an act of liberation in itself. “We are compelled to share with people through our preaching the various biblical stories that speak of God as freedom-giver, and then relate these stories to the past and present experience and condition of African Americans. For example, the Book of Exodus begins with Israel’s bondage in Egypt; however, in spite of the oppression that the Israelites experienced, God through his servant Moses led them from bondage to freedom.”²⁷

God’s historical revelation does, to be sure, carry inescapable political implications. The political model of God as King and Lord in relation to man is prominent in Hebrew thought; Yahweh’s sovereign triumphant holy will take kingdom form and even the covenant at Sinai has certain outward political treaty resemblances. “Any appeal to the Bible, however, that exaggerates and elevates political metaphors to redemptive primacy tends to misinterpret and manipulate these into ideological motifs.”²⁸

Social Prospective

Today the focus in law and justice centers on specific rights, although the concept of human rights often balloons into vague and vacuous notions like freedom and secularity. Such terms mean different things in different societies. “Humanist attempts to

²⁷ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 25.

²⁸ C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 279.

deduce human rights simply from the nature of man cannot vindicate such rights as normative. When rights have only pragmatic justification, they soon become postulates that can be easily modified and overturned.”²⁹

With an eye on structural changes in the social order, revolutionary theology molds “the active God” of the Bible to forced and violent change of the status quo. That the living God is truly active in secular affairs is evident from the scriptural designation of Cyrus as the Lord’s “anointed” to accomplish certain divine purposes (Isa. 45:1–7; cf. Ezra 1:1). But to assimilate this principle to a universal salvation history equated with sociopolitical structural changes, and usually moreover in terms of some debatable modern ideology.³⁰

If God is “where the (revolutionary) action is” and acts in revolution per se, then no transcendent criterion remains to distinguish one revolution from another as demonic or divine. German Christianity once identified God’s act and voice in history with Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933. Ancient Mesopotamian kings similarly represented major political and military policies as products of a divine Word or Command, and hence identified their gods as the moving force in history. We find here, however, no true parallel to the biblical motif of divine promise and fulfillment. From the outset, authentic Christianity nourished deep interest in the predicament of mankind for whom Christ died, and every effort by Christians to seal themselves off from society at large has eventually been disowned as a grievous mistake.

²⁹ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 427.

³⁰ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 279.

An even more serious error, however, is that of dwarfing the biblical God of covenant and redemptive intervention in history. This arises by neglecting the central biblical realities and the larger righteousness demanded by Yahweh in a mixture of both desirable and undesirable social changes and perhaps even terror tactics that leave rebellious man's inner nature untouched by the dynamic of divine redemption. "Here nature and history are manipulated by modern mythologies of human destiny. Biblical tradition is reinterpreted to provide a religious aura for this-worldly aspirations, and the living God's historical redemptive activity, consummated in him of whom Moses spoke (John 5:46), is completely secularized."³¹

Community psychology grew in part out of the social reform movement of the 1960s and has emerged as an important voice in psychology. Many professionals are drawn to community psychology because it represents an alternative to traditional clinical psychology. "The work of the community psychologist is focused on improving community life for all citizens, in preventing disorder, and in promoting psychological well-being in the population"³²

Jesus is the most glaring example of the message of liberation, and the road he traveled ended in a cruel and debasing death. More precisely Jesus is the quintessential Messenger and embodied message of liberation. The ultimate expression of liberation is in the resurrection as symbol of newness, transformation, and change.³³

The exodus moment in biblical history is somewhat similar to the civil rights moment of the 1950s and 1960s led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who led

³¹ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 279-280.

³² M. A. Yarhouse, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 233.

³³ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 11.

people of all ethnic backgrounds, particularly African Americans through one of the most challenging times in the history of America. “Nearly one hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, African Americans in Southern states still inhabited a starkly unequal world of disenfranchisement, segregation and various forms of oppression, including race-inspired violence. “Jim Crow” laws at the local and state levels barred them from classrooms and bathrooms, from theaters and train cars, from juries and legislatures.”³⁴

Just as God raised up Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage, He has raised up many to fight for the cause of freedom and liberation for all people.

Black people can identify with God as liberator because stories such as the exodus perfectly correlate with the experience of slavery in American history and the liberating power of God in the process of emancipation. James Weldon Johnson, novelist, poet, linguist, and educator, captures the understanding of God as liberator in his classic book of sermons, *God’s Trombones*. The sermon “Let My People Go” captures the liberating power and spirit of God as well as God’s relationship to the oppressed.³⁵

Historically, society has painted a negative image of the black male. These bestowed images are the product of the dominant culture’s propensity to describe the black male using negative language and symbols representative of deviant, dysfunctional behavior. “The process of overcoming pandemic problems that have plagued our history, such as slavery, the Three-fifths Clause of the Constitution, Jim Crow laws, and other educational and economic barriers has given impetus to his quest to overcome the odds; however, these same past realities have had a negative effect on his progress. The way

³⁴ “Civil Rights Movement,” History, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement>.

³⁵ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 25-26.

the black male has been treated historically is reason enough for him to be endangered, if not extinct.”³⁶

The condition of approximately twelve million black males in America is a complex phenomenon. It can be described by statistical data, but understood only by examining the pathos of the black community in the context of the larger society. Sociologically, the black male seems anathema. He is often portrayed by the media, police, educators, and others as dysfunctional, immature, hyperactive, a slow learner, violent, aggressive, lazy, and a host of other negatives. While the facts are alarming, the etiology of the condition is much more complex than its description. Today, everything in the news and on social media is against something. The easy thing to do is be anti, to be critical or to attack. Criticism is often viewed as the more intelligent response. To be effective, it is about changing attitudes, not criticizing beliefs. It is to win friends over, not shame them for their views. Demonstrating what you are for is much more powerful than simply disagreeing with everyone else and pointing out their flaws.³⁷

The verdict is still out on whether systemic oppression and injustice, however subtle or covert, is the sole cause of the black male’s condition. Likewise, there is no unanimity among preachers, theologians, social theorists, philosophers, physicians, educators, or policy makers regarding how the condition can be changed and the problems solved.³⁸ The view of Jesus as liberator and transformer does not deny his

³⁶ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 79.

³⁷ Patrick Sallee, “Speaking Truth to Power Requires Standing For...Not Against,” Good Men Project, accessed March 15, 2017, <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/speaking-truth-power-requires-standing-for-pksl/>.

³⁸ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 78.

suffering because black people are keenly aware of Jesus' suffering as well as their own. Jesus' power to overcome the suffering of the Cross via the resurrection is the basis for Christian faith and hope. This is the faith that has sustained blacks from slavery to the present crisis among black males. The resurrection is the most powerful symbol of liberation because it implies transformation and change in the most comprehensive and enduring way possible. It is in the resurrection story that the message of liberation is fully apprehended. Jesus overcomes death, hell, and the grave via the resurrection and establishes his victory over the power of sin and evil.³⁹

Like the black community in the aforementioned, in the Gospel of John, the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar is one that experienced such degradation, disgrace and shame. In this Gospel, the Pharisees assume the role of divinely appointed preservers of tradition.⁴⁰ However, there is hope in the mist of helplessness. The water at the Red Sea in a sense offered a cleansing, purging and washing of all the Israelites endured. The references to water and Spirit remind one of the themes of purification and cleansing.⁴¹ This woman at the well passage is an encouraging reflection about presuppositions and prejudices, about the mission of Jesus and worship, and it offers a wonderful paradigm for considering the nature and strategy of evangelistic outreach.⁴²

Tradition Prospective

³⁹ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 31-32.

⁴⁰ G. L. Borchert, *John 1–11* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 198.

⁴¹ Borchert, *John 1–11*, 197.

⁴² Borchert, *John 1–11*, 197.

Disorder within families can arise when the family is thought to exist for its own sake. Some of those who speak of the family as a “school for character,” says Stanley Hauerwas can “too easily turn the family into an idolatrous institution.” He continues, “Too often the church is supported because people care about the family. They assume the church is good because it produces a good family. God is worshipped as a means to help sustain what we really care about—the family.”⁴³ When the family is turned into that kind of god it spells disorder. For when family is asked to carry such supreme moral significance, it is asked to carry too much. “When the family is invested with such significance, it cannot but be morally tyrannical.”⁴⁴

The Old Testament story of Hosea illustrates the cost of the grace of forgiveness and restoration. Hosea’s wife Gomer had gone off after her lovers (Hosea 2:5) in the belief that they would lavish good things on her. This was a picture of the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel towards God but God tells Hosea to take her back, as a picture of God’s forgiveness of Israel: “Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods.” (Hosea 3:1). Hosea in fact finds her as a slave, up for sale in the market place, and has to buy her back in order to take her home. The whole story of Hosea is a vivid illustration of the Hebrew word hesed, usually translated ‘steadfast love,’ of which the New Testament counterpart is agape. “In this is agape, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and send his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10).⁴⁵

⁴³ D. J. Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics* (London, UK: Lynx Communications, 1994), 74.

⁴⁴ Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics*, 74.

⁴⁵ Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics*, 79.

One of the intriguing facts of Old Testament family life is the interplay between economic, social and religious factors. In the holiness code of Leviticus, the nineteenth chapter for example, there are regulations concerning worship, agriculture, social honesty, property, justice, sex, farming, religion, hospitality to strangers, and so on. Throughout, the refrain ‘I am the Lord’ indicates that the people’s relationship to Yahweh was the unifying dimension in all this diversity, and the people were to express in all these diverse areas of life the fact that they were the people of God. It is not possible, therefore, to separate out a book of Old Testament religion, another of Old Testament ethics, and a third of Old Testament economics. In the family, moral, spiritual, economic and social concerns are all inseparably linked. The family in ancient Israel stood at the center of a series of connected relationships: to God, to Israel and to the land.⁴⁶

Forgiveness is the antidote to what Bishop Neill calls resentment. “He says forgiveness is the creative, positive Christian Gospel response to guilt. So much of our working world, maybe of our day to day lives, certainly of our international politics, is built on the law of retaliation: ‘you owe, so you must pay’; the law of demanding rights and bearing grudges, of holding resentments and living with guilt.”⁴⁷

One such relationship of demanding rights and bearing grudges is the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well at Sychar. Sychar is probably the same with Sichem, or Shechem, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus, are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time? Shechem yielded the first proselyte that ever came into the church of Israel (Gen. 34:24), and now it is the first place where the gospel is

⁴⁶ Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics*, 74-75.

⁴⁷ Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics*, 78.

preached out of the commonwealth of Israel.⁴⁸ The scene at the well in John 4:1–26 links Jesus’ message of inclusion to those considered social outcasts.

At the time of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, the well had been in existence for about 1,800 years.⁴⁹ “Although there is no Old Testament text that relates Jacob to this well, it was part of the region’s tradition.”⁵⁰ While Jesus was resting at the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. The arrival of the woman set up a crisis for traditional Jewish custom of the day. Not only did the Jews avoid contact with the Samaritans but Jewish men avoided speaking with women in public—even their own wives! Jewish rabbis wanted women to stay “in their place.” Men certainly did not want to discuss theological issues with them.⁵¹ But Jesus was different. He spoke to her as God spoke to Hagar and as Abraham’s servant spoke to Rebekah in ancient times.

This woman was really being treated like a person. Jesus even wanted a drink from her (Jn 4:7).⁵² Jesus did not fit the stereotype of kosher-concerned Jewish men. Her first response, therefore, was to question him about his unexpected freedom in conversation.⁵³ The unorthodox encounter with Jesus was not normal as Jews and Samaritans did not communicate with each other. However, Jesus did not allow their

⁴⁸ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 1934.

⁴⁹ L. M. Schewe, “Jacob’s Well,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁵⁰ Borchert, *John 1–11*, 204.

⁵¹ Borchert, *John 1–11*, 202.

⁵² Borchert, *John 1–11*, 202.

⁵³ Borchert, *John 1–11*, 202.

history and tradition to get in the way of his mission to heal the brokenhearted and the set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4: 18).

The history of relations between the Samaritans, situated in the north around Mt. Gerizim (their holy mountain), Shechem, and Samaria, and Jewish populations in Judea and then later in Galilee is one of fluctuating tensions. The ancient tension between the northern and southern kingdoms was revived with the return of exiles to Jerusalem under the Persian ruler Cyrus' edict.⁵⁴ The return of exiles to Jerusalem, particularly with their intentions of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, posed an obvious political threat to his leadership in the north (Ezr 4:7–24; Neh 4:1–9).⁵⁵

Respect for oral tradition was particularly strong among Jews during the period at the beginning of the Christian era. Among these traditions the most important collection was Pirke Aboth (traditions of the fathers). “This consisted of comments by famous rabbis in explanation of the written law. This and a growing collection of other rabbinic traditions interpreting the Law became an authoritative commentary on the written code. This movement rapidly led to a position in which the oral law and the written code were virtually of equal standing.”⁵⁶ Oral tradition is both sharply distinguished from written tradition and yet closely connected with it. Many literary traditions are based on oral traditions, making it necessary to investigate how transitions were made from one to the other.

⁵⁴ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1886-1887.

⁵⁵ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1887.

⁵⁶ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2093.

In the ancient Near East, all significant events were committed to writing by the scribes. At the same time, an oral version of the occurrences would enable the information to be disseminated in contemporary society, and perhaps also to subsequent generations. “It is important to realize the coexistence of written and oral forms of the same material, so that the way in which material was transmitted will be understood properly.”⁵⁷

The 1500 years from the days of Abraham to the time of Ezra (c. 1900–450 bc) saw many great changes in the form of worship in ancient Israel. Abraham, the wandering nomad, built altars and offered sacrifice wherever God appeared to him. In Moses’ time the tabernacle served as a portable sanctuary for the Israelite tribes journeying through the wilderness.⁵⁸ If the form of worship changed with the times and situations, its heart and center did not. God revealed himself to Abraham, promising that his children would inherit the land of Canaan. Abraham demonstrated his faith through prayers and sacrifice. Throughout the biblical period, listening to God’s Word, prayer, and sacrifice constituted the essence of worship. The promises to Abraham were constantly recalled as the basis of Israel’s existence as a nation and its right to the land of Canaan. Modern people tend to restrict worship to what happens in church on Sunday. “Ancient Israel had a much broader concept of worship, offering worship in the home as well as in the temple several times a day, not merely on the Sabbath and at great festivals. Worship involved both the individual family and the whole nation.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2094.

⁵⁸ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2164.

⁵⁹ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2164.

Jesus came not wedded to the past of Jewish tradition and custom, nor did he come promising a blissful future. He simply came “preaching the gospel of [the kingdom] of God” (Mark 1:14, RSV alt.) “He came with a message—a message from God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It was not a flowery message, and it did not titillate the ears or massage the egos of the power elites. It was not a message laced with pretty words or empty phrases. It certainly was not what the Scribes, Pharisees, or Herodian’s wanted to hear! It was not a message that reinforced tradition or soothed the conscience but it was a liberating message, and a message of transformation that needed to be heard and heeded by kings and princes, young and old, rich and poor. It needed to be heard by all who sought to understand that the kingdom of God is manifested in Jesus Christ. It was a message that needed to be heard in Greece and Rome, in Galilee and Galatia, in Judea and Samaria, in Palestine and Syria, in Egypt and Jerusalem. “This same message needs to be heard by all who seek to be children of the living God. Well, what is the message of Jesus for the church today?”⁶⁰

Liberal thinking in the church typically has two poles. One pole is to help liberate congregations from unenlightened attitudes. Preachers find core aspects of the Bible and Christian faith to be reliable, but they also conclude that the Bible and traditional Christian doctrine contain elements that are not objectively true. Some of these elements misrepresent reality and move in the direction of superstition.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Harris, *Preaching Liberation*, 18-19.

⁶¹ R. J. Allen, *Thinking Theologically: The Preacher as Theologian* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 24.

When considering the Samaritan woman at the well, she may have thought she was free and liberated by coming to the well in the middle of the day; however, one encounter with Jesus the liberator opened her eyes to see she was entangled in the chains of tradition, shame and sin. She had been enslaved in her relationships with her husbands that Jesus was able to flush out of her through respectful communication. She had been in bondage to the limited worship of her traditional past and where that worship should take place.

Those who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent and as solemnly consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the hour is come when there shall be no difference put in God's account; no, not between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety.⁶² Every place would be as sacred and as hallowed as these notable shrines, when the full character and real nature of the object of worship became fully known.⁶³

Conclusion

All human acceptability before God whether according to the Old Testament or the New Testament is built on God's grace rather than human achievement? Just as it could only be fruitless for ancient Israel to attempt to re-create a pre-covenant-breaking Israel, all our attempts to re-create a supposedly pure New Testament church are misguided idealism. The history of humanity and of Israel teaches us that such pristine

⁶² Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 1937.

⁶³ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, *St. John* (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1909), 168.

purity has never existed. “As Paul argues so forcefully, neither human morality as such nor Israelite law keeping has made anyone acceptable before God” (Rom. 1–3).⁶⁴

The intercessory role of God’s chosen mediator, Moses, is depicted with special clarity in these chapters. It illuminates the role of that historically unique servant of God. It points ahead typologically to the fuller mediator role of Jesus Christ. In a lower key, it shows how God uses chosen leaders in his service. Intercession is a role to which all believers are called.⁶⁵ Finally, God’s grace prevails as the covenant is renewed. “Israel could only be God’s people in the form of God’s forgiven people. The same holds true for the church.”⁶⁶

Whether the well belonged to Jacob or not does not matter. It makes no difference what the history or tradition behind the story may be; it could be true or full of falsehoods, it does not matter. Those facts spoken or written may play an important role in the genealogy, heritage, customs and traditions of an institution, person, or community. The good news is, through God’s agape love, Jesus can address the issues and complexities of our lives and our world no matter how difficult the situations.

American gospel recording artist Tasha Cobbs from her major-label debut studio album Grace (2013) has a powerful message. The song was composed by Will Reagan, produced by VaShawn Mitchell; Tasha sings, “There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain.” There is comfort in knowing, the struggles and trials that are before us and the bondage and suppression that is before us. The chains and shackles that have

⁶⁴ Janzen, *Exodus*, 412.

⁶⁵ Janzen, *Exodus*, 412.

⁶⁶ Janzen, *Exodus*, 414.

imprisoned us are no challenge for the great liberator Jesus Christ. The beauty is that the same liberating power that is in Christ is available to each of his children that invites and accepts Him as Lord of our lives. Classical and modern leaders, civic, spiritual and religious leaders, and average common people are candidates to be recipients of this power. The liberating power comes through a covenant with God in his son Jesus, through the power of His Holy Spirit.

It is this liberating power that will release governments, communities, families, peoples and churches, from the bondage of traditions, customs, habits and rituals that hold them back from being their true authentic selves, ready to present themselves before a righteous and Holy God. It is this liberating power that will restore the communities and families of their economic hardships and social wounds of imbalanced injustice among the races and ethnic derangements. This content is relevant and will help formulate information that will assist the final project.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The goal of this chapter is to examine different types of churches and worship styles that will address the concerns of the problem statement. Social and psychological theories will be discussed concerning the Mega-church, the Traditional Orthodox Church and Non-denominational churches. Models developed by other ministries will be examined and other disciplines from the psychological and sociological arena will be investigated along with movement within the topic area that will explore the project problem. This chapter will incorporate reviewing resources to provide insight into existing knowledge and theories on what has worked and what has failed in speaking to the problems in the church. It will also deal with traditions and methodologies that have challenged the church in reaching its fullest potential in being a positive resource in serving its community and increasing the population in the Kingdom of God.

Contemporary theories relevant to the theme and hypothesis defined in the targeted project will be examined. In addition, assumptions, biases, and generalizations made about the project questions and project statement will be explored. The information that will emerge from this chapter will provide justification and strong backing to support the final project. Assessing the problems will include defining key terms from the problem statement, and comparing views from different sources as they are weighed against each other to bring strength or weakness to the larger project

Statement, "A Church Honoring Tradition through the Word of God in a Diminishing Community."

What is "theory"? Teori Kritis Kontemporer seems to think the question is a rather easy one for contemporary science. Theory for most researchers is the sum-total of propositions about a subject—the propositions being so linked with each other that a few are basic and the rest derive from these. The smaller the number of primary principles in comparison with the derivations, the more perfect the theory. The real validity of the theory depends on the derived propositions being consonant with the facts. If experience and theory contradict each other, one of the two must be re-examined. Either the scientist has failed to observe correctly, or something is wrong with the principles of the theory in relation to the facts, therefore, a theory always remains a hypothesis.¹

The theoretical framework concerning the focus of this project gives room for questions to be asked such as, can the Orthodox Christian Church survive in a changing world without a paradigm shift, or should the church kill out-of-date traditions before those traditions kill the church? Beginning in the 1960's the American culture underwent a cultural revolution that began ripping apart the mainline structure of society with every industry from social-economics, interracial and cultural relationships, government and defense, to an evolution in technology.² Everything was changing with the evolving world except for the Orthodox Church.

¹ Teori Kontemporer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," accessed July 15, 2017, <https://rahmatwibowo4.blogspot.com/2015/03/teori-kritis-tradisional-teori-kritis.html>.

² D. Saheb, "7 Main Factors Which Affect the Social Change in Every Society," Share Your Essays, accessed July 15, 2017, <http://www.shareyouressays.com/112456/7-main-factors-which-affect-the-social-change-in-every-society>.

In the last several decades, cities, states, organizations, and institutions have found themselves challenged by a growing multiculturalism and a pluralistic society. The world has shifted, families have changed, and schools have children who may speak many different languages and come from different countries. Businesses have become culturally sensitive and have adjusted to meet the needs of a changing community; however, the churches in the community have remained the same, stagnant in their traditions as when their culture was formed. The suggestion is not that the church should change its biblical message, but there might be a need to consider altering its methodology so that it will reach the community.³ The reality of the twenty-first century is that individual lives are a constant litany of change. Even when we stay in one place, we make different choices as our lives evolve.⁴

Theoretical Foundations in Ministry Practice

A theory is a statement as to how and why particular facts are related. In sociology, sociological perspectives, theories, or paradigms are complex theoretical and methodological frameworks, used to analyze and explain objects of social study, and facilitate organizing sociological knowledge. An example of a sociological theory comes from the work of Robert Putnam. Putman's work focused on the decline of civic engagement. Putnam found that Americans' involvement in civic life (e.g., community organizations, clubs, voting, religious participation, etc.) has declined over the last forty

³ E. H. Hammett and J. R. Pierce, *Reaching People Under Forty While Keeping People Over Sixty* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2007), 3.

⁴ C. S. Dudley and N. T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing and Adapting in Changing Communities* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 2.

to sixty years. While there are various factors that contribute to this decline, one of the prominent factors is the increased consumption of television as a form of entertainment. Putnam's theory proposes: The more television people watch, the lower their involvement in civic life will be.⁵

The theory of trouble in the church is no strange topic and have been marked by several assumptions, from its conception with the Apostles and early followers of “the way (Acts 9:2),” to Martin Luther and his protest of the Roman Catholic Church with his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517.⁶ Virtually every Baptist church, denomination, agency, or organization is, at present, striving to maintain or achieve harmony, peace, and cooperation—the quality that, for want of a better word, we have called “balance.”⁷ The theory still exists that mainline Protestant Churches are in trouble says David Millard Haskell, a professor of religion and culture at Wilfrid Laurier University. A 2015 report by the Pew Research Center found that these congregations, once a mainstay of American religion, are now shrinking by about one million members annually. Fewer members not only mean fewer souls saved, a frightening thought for some clergy members, but also less income for churches, further ensuring their decline.⁸

⁵ Candela Wyamaker, “Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology,” Boundless Sociology Textbooks, July 20, 2014, <https://www.boundless.com/sociology/textbooks/boundless-sociology-textbook/sociology-1/theoretical-perspectives-in-sociology-24/theoretical-perspectives-in-sociology-154-8965/>.

⁶ C. N. Trueman, “Roman Catholic Church in 1500,” History Learning Site, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-reformation/roman-catholic-church-in-1500/>.

⁷ E. C. Goodwin, *Baptist in the Balance: The Tension between Freedom and Responsibility* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1997), 52.

⁸ David Haskell, “Liberal Churches are Dying but Conservatives Churches are Thriving,” Washington Post, accessed July 20, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/04/liberal-churches-are-dying-but-conservative-churches-are-thriving/>.

One of the most frequent questions asked is “What is the average growth rate of a church?” Eighty percent of the churches in America are not growing, and eight churches a day close in the United States and Canada. According to the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, the Southern Baptist Convention reported 16,160,088 members for a decline of nearly half a percent (42%). These numbers counted are much more than statistics and tools—each number represents a person God knows, loves, and desires to have a relationship with. They also represent people missing out on that relationship with Jesus Christ.⁹

How much growth does it take to grow a church? In church growth terms, a church is not growing unless it increases by five percent a year. On the other side, a church is not in a decline unless it is losing five percent a year. The median church in America has seventy-five parishioners in worship on any given Sunday morning, while less than half a percent become a megachurch (a megachurch is a congregation with at least 2,000 people attending worship on Sunday) and only 16% of megachurches have over 5000 in attendance.¹⁰

Church growth, in some segments of the United States, has varied accordingly by denomination. Below is a study shown by mychurchgrowth.com indicating that last year the larger denomination churches reported a decline in membership. Here are the top growing denominations by reported membership in the United States (including those that are considered cults).

⁹ Rick Robinson, “The Average of Your Church,” accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.mychurchgrowth.com/church%20growth/agr.php>.

¹⁰ Robinson, “The Average of Your Church,” accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.mychurchgrowth.com/church%20growth/agr.php>.

1. Jehovah's Witnesses, the 20th largest denomination with 1,162 claimed members, was up 4.37 percent last year.
2. Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the 24th largest denomination in the U.S. with 1,043,606 claimed members were up 4.31 percent last year.
3. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (Mormons) the 4th largest denomination with 6,058,907 members, was up 1.42 percent in claimed members.
4. The Catholic Church, the largest denomination, claiming 68,503,456 members, was up .57 percent last year.
5. Assemblies of God, the 9th largest denomination claimed 2,914,669 members, up .52 percent.¹¹
6. Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the 22nd largest denomination with 1,076,254 members, was up .38 percent.

Here are the largest denominations in the United States reporting a decline in membership.

1. United Church of Christ, 1,080,199 members, down 2.83 percent.
2. The Episcopal Church, 2,006,343 members, down 2.48 percent.
3. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2,770,730 members, down 2.61 percent.
4. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 4,542,868 members, down 1.96 percent.
5. American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., 1,310,505 members, down 1.55 percent.
6. The Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod (LCMS), 2,312,111 members, down 1.08 percent.
7. The United Methodist Church, 7,774,931 members, down 1.01 percent.
8. Southern Baptist Convention, 16,160,088 members, down .42

¹¹ Robinson, The Average of Your Church, accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.mychurchgrowth.com/church%20growth/agr.php>.

percent.¹²

A General Model of Church Growth and Decline by John Hayward, published in the *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* proposed that only a subset of the church, the enthusiasts, are involved in the recruitment process, and only for a limited period after their conversion. It is found that the church reaches equilibrium in its proportion of society according to the potential of these enthusiasts to reproduce themselves, and the losses from the church. If this reproduction potential is below a threshold that depends on losses, then extinction occurs. If it is above a higher threshold, then the church sees rapid revival growth. The model is applied to many church denominations to examine their prospects for survival or revival growth. Generally, declining churches do so because their reproductive potential is inadequate, rather than due to excessive losses.¹³ Hayward is saying that church growth is intentional, exciting and targeted by a group within the church. He is saying that it is a strategic function that is implemented in a timely fashion and early in the conversion experience. It is based on a positive experience with a goal of reproduction and duplication as a core value in mind.

In the last thirty years' considerable effort has been expended in attempting to understand how churches grow and decline. Some of this work has been conducted by churches, and other religious groups, and includes both data gathering and qualitative work to enhance their prospects of growth. However, there is also a growing body of sociological literature attempting to understand church growth, much of it in response to

¹² John Hayward, “A General Model of Church Growth and Decline,” accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.churchmodel.org.uk/Hayward2005.pdf>.

¹³ Hayward, “A General Model of Church Growth and Decline,” accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.churchmodel.org.uk/Hayward2005.pdf>.

R.G. Hamerton-Kelley who claimed, in a book originally published in 1972, that strict churches are strong and hence grow, whereas liberal ones are weak and hence decline. As such there has developed a change of emphasis in the sociology of religion away from secularization theory, which assumed that religion always declines as society becomes more advanced, to recognition of the robustness and growth of churches.¹⁴

The theory of tradition in the church, whether it should be done away with, and how it should be dealt with is a concern for many pastors. Members of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) wrote an article addressing their belief of four dynamic forces that influence how a congregation worships. They believe these forces are often beyond the control of the worship leader's direct influence, and they include the founding culture of the congregation, the worship traditions the church embraces and respects, the musical baseline that the church accepts as normative for worship, and the size of the space available for worship. Of these four, the founding culture is the most difficult to describe because it can be a unique and subtle aspect to identify and track over time. It's a big component of a congregation's DNA.¹⁵

Before visiting Saddleback Community Church in California, the UUA read *The Purpose Driven Church*, the best-selling book written by their founding pastor Rick Warren. They recognized that this congregation was a brand new entrepreneurial start with its founding pastor and culture still intact and extremely visible. This visibility has made a tremendous difference in its ability to create an innovative worship model that has

¹⁴ Hayward, “A General Model of Church Growth and Decline,” accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.churchmodel.org.uk/Hayward2005.pdf>.

¹⁵ “The Role of Culture and Tradition: Worship That Works,” Unitarian Universalist Association, accessed July 23, 2017, <http://www.uua.org/worship/theory/worshipworks/129231.shtml>.

transformed its members' lives, its local community, and re-shaped the American worship experience. Even though Pastor Warren defined and controlled the founding culture of Saddleback, he is a product of a Southern Baptist tradition that believes the preached word of God as expressed in the Bible is the heart of the worship experience. This is an aspect of traditional worship, which (despite its innovations), the Saddleback Church respected and embodied.¹⁶ "Many feel that organizational structures conflict with the work of the Holy Spirit, but they need not do so. Organization is essential to the viability of the church and its ministry. God's grace is not bound by human forms; rather, God has condescended to use human instruments to work out the divine purposes."¹⁷

Warren elaborates on his story and how the large mega-church got started. He contends in the myths behind large churches that the focus is not on numbers filling pews but rather the quality of ministry and offering parishioners something that will keep them coming back.¹⁸ He had to be confident in what God had called him to do despite not having all the information as far as a long-range strategy for the church. The Saddleback ministry was not a product of vision and planning in the traditional sense, but rather a rapid response to the needs of a changing world. So, in a sense, Warren changed the classification of the term vision from its traditional meaning. In redefining the word, he

¹⁶ "The Role of Culture and Tradition," accessed July 23, 2017, <http://www.uua.org/worship/theory/worshipworks/129231.shtml>.

¹⁷ N. H. Maring and W. S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1991), 1.

¹⁸ R. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 48.

says vision is the ability to accurately assess current changes and take advantage of them.

Vision is being alert to opportunities.¹⁹

In the Orthodox Christian tradition-driven church the favorite phrase is “We’ve always done it this way.” The goal of this church is to perpetuate and copy the past. Change in this church is almost always seen as negative and stagnation is interpreted as “stability.” Older churches tend to be bound together by rules, regulations, and rituals, while younger churches tend to be connected by mission and purpose. Tradition can be such a driving force that everything else, even God’s will, can become secondary.²⁰

Although Warren admits the tradition from the Southern Baptist Faith is a foundational pillar at Saddleback when it comes to the Word of God, he also contributes the success in the church to being a younger non-denominational church not imbedded in decades of tradition. This one aspect has been the leverage Warren needed to bring success to the ministry. Not being tied down to tradition gave occasion to try new and innovative things in the ministry, many of which Warren admits have succeeded, while others seem to have failed disastrously.²¹ However, many of those failures produced opportunities that turned misfortune into ministry.

Saddleback uses for its model the example of a healthy church found in Acts 2:42- 47. These five facets of growth in the ministry are described in the first church at Jerusalem. The first Christians fellowshipped, edified each other, worshiped, ministered and evangelized. As a result, the Lord added to their number daily those who were being

¹⁹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 27-28.

²⁰ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 77.

²¹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 28.

saved. Rick Warren and the Saddleback Church have embraced these five dimensions for growing a healthy church as their model: “churches grow warmer through fellowship, churches grow deeper through discipleship, churches grow stronger through worship, churches grow broader through ministry, and churches grow larger through evangelism.”²²

Warren believes there is no “one size fits all” approach in ministry. However, earlier in his ministry he read Dr. Robert Schuller’s book, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*. In 1955, Schuller went door to door asking hundreds of people questions concerning church. Skeptical, Warren used this as a model and surveyed his territory. The Saddleback Church went door to door in the community asking questions about how the church can help the families in the neighborhood and what kind of things they would like to see the church doing. They discovered four common complaints about church in the Saddleback Valley: “church is boring, especially the sermons: church members are unfriendly, the church only wants money, and I’m concerned about the church’s child care.”²³

One of Rick Warren’s favorite movies scenes is in Raiders of the Lost Ark. There is a cliff-hanging point where the actor playing Indiana Jones is asked the question, “What are we going to do now?” Jones replies, “How do I know? I’m making it up as we go along!”²⁴ The blockbuster film is filled with action packed drama that encompasses risk, adventure, uncertainty, chance and spontaneity.²⁵ Jones was not embarrassed to

²² Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 49.

²³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 187-192.

²⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 28.

admit he did not have all the answers. What one may have for him, he was not sure it was going to work anymore. Well, the church is kind of in the same situation. What used to work for churches in the past is either obsolete or needs to be modified. Pastors are leading churches without knowing sometimes, what to do, how to do it, getting adequate support, or seeing great results will work.²⁶

Warren like so many other preachers realized operating in the norm was not going to reach the mass number of people that the traditional church was not reaching out to. Saddleback's goal was to reach all kinds of people the churched and the unchurched. They focused on people hurting from emotional pain, divorce, the death of a loved one, unemployment, financial problems, marriage and family difficulties, loneliness, stress, and the list goes on.²⁷ This strategy catapulted Saddleback to becoming one of the fastest growing churches in America along with T.D. Jakes Potter's House, Creflo Dollar's Life Changer's Ministry, and Joel Olsten's Lakewood Church.²⁸ The growth of these churches are rewarding but does not come without heavy criticism. Critics labeled these churches as prosperity and pagan ministries mainly because of the amounts of money these churches collect through giving.²⁹

²⁵ YouTube, "Indiana Jones 4 Jungle Scene," June 7, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNbV4i7C9cE>.

²⁶ Hammett, *Reaching People Under Forty*, 3.

²⁷ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 182.

²⁸ Samuel Smith, "Rick Warren's Saddleback Church Tops 50 Megachurches in America List," June 7, 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rick-warren-saddleback-church-j Joel-Osteen-50-megachurches-in-america-149846/>.

²⁹ Mary Hinton, *The Commercial Church: Black Churches and the New Religious Marketplace in America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 96-97.

However, while there are many church growth ideas, strategies and concepts that have universal appeal and applicability, they must have cultural relevancy and value if they are to be pertinent in different cultural contexts. What may work in an Anglo church may not necessarily work in an African American church. What may work in a Korean congregation may not work in a Native American church. Carlyle Stewart says, it is important that cultural characteristics of target audiences must be taken into consideration when developing models of church growth. There is no one master template that is plug and play when it comes to what the answers are to meet the challenges are the church you attend. In his book *Growing the African American Church*, Stewart writes about allowing people to come through the back door will draw people to the front door. There are communities of people that are unchurched but want to be a part of the faith community through outreach. Traditionally for some churches, participation in ministry is not accessible if you are not a member. The back door or side door program of the church was important to Stewart because it contributed to his growth in the church. He says his past experiences in the street, along with twenty-three years of serving the traditional churches, have enabled him to help others that were not trained, equipped or oriented to handle church from the front door. He has reached the hearts and minds of longtime members of the church with the message that drugs and alcohol are not the problems. Sin is the problem and until all are saved all are vulnerable to sin, however it manifests itself.³⁰

Edward Hammett says in his book, *Reaching People Under Forty while Keeping People over Sixty,*" that the challenges churches face today are increasingly difficult. Due

³⁰ C. S. Stewart, *Growing the African American Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 106.

to the secular shift, we are no longer in a churched culture. The number of unchurched persons in America increased by 92% between the years 1991 and 2004. We live in a pluralistic culture that is insensitive to the traditional church. Church leaders who are sensitive to what is happening both inside and outside the walls of the church have a growing awareness that the world outside the established church is changing and that new methodologies and strategies are needed to remain relevant.

Stewart had a plan on the same scale of Rick Warren. He decided to redeem his community and needed a clear understanding of the nature and needs of those outside the walls of the church. To accomplish this task, the church partnered with business to assess the needs and developed a plan consisting of demographics related to social development, land use and zoning, community facilities and services, housing development and economic development. From this study, the church created a ministry focus agenda to meet the needs of the children, youth, underserved and un-parented. The growth of the youth ministry eventually brought in other kids, parents, neighbors, and caregivers.³¹

Pastors were used in a primitive way of gauging progress in the church. The four B's model is comprised of counting progress by looking at bodies, budgets, baptisms, and buildings. However, they have been to notice over time that the pews are not as full as they once were, and fewer children were attending. They notice that more funerals were being performed than weddings across the congregation, and on any given Sunday that more gray heads appear in the pews than blacks, browns, and blond heads.³² Well, the B model is no longer considered a safe and stable model because research has shown that

³¹ Stewart, *Growing the African American Church*, 92-93.

³² Hammett, *Reaching People Under Forty*, 2-3.

the building is not necessary to have worship service, and online giving the use of technology and streaming means the total church experience can be obtain in the comfort of your home.

As technology developed over the years, the church has tried to keep pace. Churches in the 1920s streamed services and messages over radio broadcasts, attempting to reach a wider audience and draw new members into physical church buildings. Television became a prominent feature in many American homes, and Christianity tapped into this technology to reach the millions who tuned in to hear the message. Now, in today's digital age, more and more churches are streaming their worship services online to assist in spreading the Good News and joining the trend of instantaneous availability.³³ The interest in spirituality in the United States is growing, but this has not translated into greater church involvement. Many Christians have left congregations and formed house churches, small group's ministries and Bible studies meetings in one another's homes.³⁴

While churches prolong adapting their structures and programming to the changing world around them, it often makes church life difficult. When the church moves from plateaued to declining, it will first try to maintain the same level of ministries, but this becomes challenging. Leaders become hard to find, and the faithful few are stretched thin, there is limited time and energy and restricted resources. At this point the focus of the church becomes survival mode, now they have moved from mission to maintenance.³⁵

³³ “To Stream or Not to Stream Your Church Service,” Aspen Group, accessed July 25, 2017, <http://www.aspengroup.com/blog/to-stream-or-not-to-stream-your-church-service>.

³⁴ Hammett, *Reaching People Under Forty*, 12-13.

³⁵ Hammett, *Reaching People Under Forty*, 6.

There is a myth that the church has all the answers when in fact the church is an institution of faith not fact. The enormous responsibility placed on pastors to inspire and encourage people from every walk of life in one message is unreasonable. In church, the generations bump heads and collide. The challenge of reaching people under forty while keeping and not losing people over sixty is a generational nightmare. Parishioners have different preferences with lifestyles, types of worship, genre of music and attire. The church is confronted with meeting the needs of the congregation with some level of satisfaction because the happier the church goers are, they will continue to return, the more they are committed to returning to worship, and the more they tend to give of their time and their financial resources.

In Gasper Colon's *Incarnational Community Based Ministry*, he sees churches mission as a partnership with the community. It incarnates itself in that community, discovers from the community the burning issues, brings the ministry of the church out into the community, and nurtures personal relationships with individuals in the community. This third kind of church sees the value of connecting with the local leadership of the community surrounding the church. The unique needs of the community help mold the avenues through which this church will conduct its heaven-sent mission.

Gasper favors the model of success. It consists of the methods Christ used to reach people: "Socializing: "The Savior mingled with people (open networks)." Sympathizing: "He showed His sympathy for them," Serving: "He ministered to their needs," and Salvation: "He bade them to "Follow Me (conversion)." The Holy Spirit uses socializing, sympathizing, and serving to lead people to have confidence. Confidence comes from two Latin words: con, which means "with," and fide, which means "faith."

This could be translated into the concept of developing a trust relationship with individuals. This takes time and that time cannot be accelerated by willing it so. Confidence is something aided by the Holy Spirit when He has all the ingredients in place. Finally, when this method had been lived out and trust established, Jesus “bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” This invitation goes beyond the testimony of baptism. It is a call to discipleship. It is a call to join the body of Christ in living and ministering as Jesus did. It is a call to discover spiritual gifts that new members can apply to Christ’s method.³⁶

Sociological and Psychological

The word psychology derives from two Greek terms meaning “the study of persons.” Some argue that since the Greek root from which we get “*psych*” means “spirit” or “soul,” psychology is religious in nature and involves the study of the spirit or soul. However, one must realize that because of the evolving nature of language, word origin or etymology does not necessarily point to what the word means in contemporary usage. Christians call this aspect “soul” or “spirit,” and certainly the Bible affirms the reality of the immaterial human nature as “soul” or “spirit.” Even biblically speaking, however, a significant function of this immaterial aspect involves reasoning, communicating, emotions, memory, and social interaction, all of which can be studied, to at least some extent, without full consideration of how these aspects relate to one’s relationship with God. This is the focus of psychology.³⁷

³⁶ Gaspar F. Colón, "Incarnational Community-Based Ministry: A Leadership Model for Community Transformation," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 10-17, accessed July 19, 2017, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

³⁷ Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino, “Psychology and the Church,” accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.equip.org/article/psychology-and-the-church-part-one/>.

The field of family psychology has been welcomed in the Christian academic community. The key tenets of the orientation are compatible with the biblical emphasis on the family. An ecological systems approach to understanding the complex nature of interactive forces that shape human behavior accords well with the Old and New Testament recognition of humans as part of a living creation. The role of the church, as part of the environmental context of life, is conceptualized as a resource for healthy living within the family psychology paradigm.³⁸

Many Christians believe they have been abandoned by the church and consequently turn to psychology. In 1988 Americans spent an estimated \$273.3 billion on mental health services. To handle this growth market, between 1959 and 1989 the number of practicing professional clinical psychologists increased by a factor of sixteen, from 2,500 to 40,000. Additional kinds of mental health workers have proliferated, including licensed social workers, clinical workers, lay counselors, pastoral counselors, peer counselors, support group leaders, and other assorted caregivers.³⁹

Churches, Bible colleges and seminaries, Christian speakers, and Christian publishers across the country are promoting mental health programs to help Christians solve their personal problems and find personal fulfillment. Many Christian educational institutions have added psychology classes, and some even have Masters and Ph.D. programs in psychology. Twelve Step programs patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous

³⁸ M. Stanton, "Family Psychology," *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 439.

³⁹ Passantino and Passantino, "Psychology and the Church," accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.equip.org/article/psychology-and-the-church-part-one/>.

(AA) have been adapted by churches to address almost any kind of persistent personal problem, from obesity to “spiritual” addictions.

Christians argue that inclusion of psychological principles and teachings into a biblical counseling setting is the only way to provide competent mental health care to Christians.⁴⁰ No doubt for many, the therapist has replaced or supplements the clergyman as the place to turn to for counsel in times of distress. A pastoral counselor is a bit different than a clinical counselor or therapist. Their differences, though quite distinct once explained, may not be immediately apparent to a client. To start, pastoral counselors, such as chaplains, pastors, church counselors, and ministerial counselors, are regulated and credentialed by ecclesiastical groups and professional associations. Clinical Counselors are regulated and licensed by state government boards, and often certified or credentialed by professional organizations. They may provide similar services, pastoral counselors integrate spirituality, faith and theology with psychotherapy to help people seeking assistance with personal, family, marital and faith issues. The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) is the only association that issues the Certified Pastoral Counselor certification.⁴¹

When the church fails to minister in a complete and biblical way, people’s needs go unmet and they turn to other sources for solutions to those needs. The ministry of the church should include support and nurture for its members, including biblical counseling or instruction. At the same time, there are those Christians who completely reject any

⁴⁰ Passantino and Passantino, “Psychology and the Church,” accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.equip.org/article/psychology-and-the-church-part-one/>.

⁴¹ Paul Armstrong, “Becoming a Pastoral Counselor,” Pastoral Counseling, accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.pastoralcounseling.org/how-to-become>.

psychological theories or therapies, denouncing psychology as a rival religion and substitute for the atoning and cleansing work of Christ.⁴²

There is an interdependent relationship existed between sociology and theology: “Sociology without theology is powerless and the latter without the former is blind.” That statement was made by Wuthnow, an established (understatement) sociologist at Princeton University. In his book *After the Baby Boomers*, he states, “If I were a religious leader, I would be troubled by the facts and figures currently describing the lives of young Americans, their involvement in congregations, and their spiritual practices.”⁴³ He is troubled because “the future of American religion” resides in young adults who are forty-five and younger and that the proportions of this group’s religious participation are shrinking. He further claims that “unless religious leaders take younger adults more seriously, the future of American religion is in doubt.”

Sociological analysis of religion in the context of modernity confirms the view that it is perfectly possible for religious movements to experience significant numerical growth without this affecting the dominant values and ethos of a secularized culture in the slightest way. Thousands of people may claim to be born-again, yet business goes on as usual. Jesus may be praised as Lord in lively and joyful celebrations on Sunday, but the counter-cultural values of the kingdom he proclaimed seem to be non-transferable

⁴² Armstrong, “Becoming a Pastoral Counselor,” accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.pastoralcounseling.org/how-to-become>.

⁴³ H. H. Kim, “Review of After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion by Robert Wuthnow,” *Themelios* 35, no. 2 (July 2010): 339.

when it comes to the realms of education, the media, advertising, business and commercial activity.⁴⁴

Are there grounds for hope that Christianity can transform and renew modern culture? What concrete evidence might suggest that the churches of the West can discover the spiritual and intellectual strength required to challenge the fundamental values of a deeply secular society? Regarding the evangelical movement, is it conceivable that this tradition might resist and destroy the monstrous idols that extend their control into every aspect of our economic and social life? Can we really believe that it can offer the world at the dawn of the third millennium a radically new and hopeful vision of human existence, shaped by beliefs and values that would lay the foundation for a culture characterized by love, compassion, justice and life lived within limits?⁴⁵

It is no secret that an extremely important and often sharp and divisive debate currently rages among Christians over both the meaning of evangelism and salvation and the relationship of evangelism to social justice. The late Billy Graham is the best-known representative of the view that the primary mission of the church is evangelism, the goal of which is the personal salvation of individual souls.⁴⁶ Religion can play a part in legitimizing a social construction of reality through its traditions and rituals that can give divine sanction to mores, roles and institutions. The religious symbolic universe provides a ‘sacred canopy’ to the extent that it is accepted and followed, whether by the general

⁴⁴ D. Smith, “Junction or Terminus? Christianity in the West at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,” *Themelios* 25, no. 3 (June 2000): 58.

⁴⁵ Smith, “Junction or Terminus,” 58.

⁴⁶ Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships," *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 255 (1975): 251-267, accessed July 19, 2017, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

populace or by a smaller circle of the religion's practitioners. This 'sacred canopy' can have its formal elements, such as an official theology and rites that support the status quo, and a popular adherence which would be less sophisticated and give its own slant to these beliefs and sacraments. The sociology of knowledge, therefore, also stresses the world of meaning within which people live and move. This discipline, like interpretative anthropology, concentrates on meaning and on how people understand their life.⁴⁷

The standards for difference institutions should always be greatly interchangeable. For example, the military is the focal point of our nation, and is responsible for our safety as they defend us from terrorist attacks and threats from other foreign nations. That is not their only function; they also assist the nation when national disasters and humanitarian missions with fighting fires and extreme weather situations occur. Chiefly, our Armed Forces enables our national and military leaders to design, plan, organize, train for, and execute worldwide missions as our forces transform to meet emerging challenges.⁴⁸

Following 9/11, the worst disaster on America soil, the federal government moved quickly to develop a security framework to protect our country from large-scale attacks directed from abroad, while enhancing federal, state, and local capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from threats and disasters at home. A key element of this framework included the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in March of 2003, bringing together twenty-two separate agencies and offices into a single, cabinet-level department. The DHS and its many partners across the federal government,

⁴⁷ M. Daniel R. Carroll, "Context, Bible and Ethics: A Latin American Perspective," *Themelios* 19, no. 3 (May 1994): 10.

⁴⁸ Kevin Scott, "Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations," USN, January 17, 2017, accessed July 29, 2017, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf.

public and private sectors, and communities throughout the country have strengthened the homeland security enterprise to better mitigate and defend against dynamic threats.⁴⁹

Nearly every institution in the modern world have adjusted the needs of the community it serves. Technology and the digital-age technologies have already transformed our world, for better and for worse. The use of mobile devices by health care professionals (HCPs) has transformed many aspects of clinical practice. Smartphones and tablets combine both computing and communication features in a single device that can be held in a hand or stored in a pocket, allowing easy access and use at the point of care.⁵⁰ The banking industry has met the needs of the community through having access to instant funds at ATM machines, check by phone and mobile banking on the cellphone.

The church must become interchangeable in its function. Although the vision remains the same, the mission should continue to change and be modified to meet the needs of the community it serves. One of the issues that people are debating is the relevancy of the church in this postmodern world. Relevancy must do with speaking and acting on the issues and concerns that are most critical to people's lives. Dr. Frank Thomas, Professor of Homiletics at Christian Theological Seminary, wants to know what is more relevant for people's lives than healthcare and, as a result, why the church is basically silent on this critical issue. What kind of nation are we going to be and what is the nature of our social contract? How is it that you can work your whole life and suffer a major illness and lose everything? We have the only health care system in the world

⁴⁹ Department of Homeland Security, "Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)," accessed July 28, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/implementing-911-commission-recommendations>.

⁵⁰ C. Lee Ventola, "Mobile Devices and Apps for Health Care Professionals," accessed July 29, 2017, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4029126/>.

based on profit. Companies make a profit by covering the healthy and denying coverage to as many sick people as possible. People who do not have healthcare are virtually silent in this debate. It is the role of the church to speak for the voiceless. Why is the church so silent on its responsibility to speak for the voiceless? Many say that they do not want to get into politics from the pulpit. This is not primarily a political issue, but a moral issue that has political expression. The church is called to speak to the moral issues of our time.⁵¹

This is not your granddaddy's church is a statement that Pastor John Gray of Lakewood church says. Senior Pastor Joel Olsten has mastered the worship experience at Lakewood so that the attendance is 38,000 people weekly, and over twenty million television viewers. He is the most optimistic evangelist in America and one of the most popular. Osteen will not call you out as a sinner. His goal is to make you feel good about yourself. He will not warn you about the devil; he likely will not even mention the name, but he will urge you to cast off negative thinking. He calls himself an "encourager." He is as much pop-psychologist as preacher urging followers to cultivate a "prosperous mindset."⁵²

Today preachers are becoming not just preachers of the Gospel but they are becoming everything for everybody. They must be psychologist, sociologist, economist, effective leaders and the list goes on. They must become everything to everybody. The

⁵¹ Bertrand Borg, "Church has Obligation to Speak on Marl Issues – Archbishop," Times of Malta, accessed July 19, 2017, <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20130101/local/church-has-obligation-to-speak-on-moral-issues-archbishop.451615>.

⁵² Leslie Scrivener and Joel Osteen, "America's Most Optimistic Evangelist," The Star, accessed July 15, 2017, https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/09/01/joel_osteen_americas_most_optimistic_evangelist.html.

primary roles of a pastor are to feed the spirit and to shepherd the soul of each person.

Pastors are often sought in times of emotional difficulty and serve as front-line primary mental health caregivers in many communities.⁵³

Likewise, today church buildings are more than just sanctuaries. They are multipurpose centers made accessible to the community. Churches are now local meeting centers where homeowners' association meetings are held. They are voting centers for the community. They are at time the largest standing structure in the community and used as disaster relief centers until the local Red Cross can relieve the church. The pews are no longer anchored to the floor but the chairs fold up and the sanctuary turns into a gymnasium and a dance floor. It is this kind of partnership between the church and the community that will ultimately revitalize the institution of the church and energize and revitalize the community.

Overall, this is very much an account of religion in the contemporary western world. In a fast-paced, rapidly moving culture, it provides a place to pause and take the religious pulse of our present context. While a resource that attempts to do this may prove quickly outdated, it stands as an important marker nonetheless and a resourceful guide. It is a brave project to have taken on before the cultural dust has settled—and maybe never will.⁵⁴

Conclusion

⁵³ Jeff Walker, "Why Would a Pastor Study Psychology," Tony Cooke, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.tonycooke.org/articles-by-others/pastor-psychology/>.

⁵⁴ A. Robbins, "Review of Dictionary of Contemporary Religion in the Western World Edited by Christopher Partridge," *Themelios* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 2003): 126.

As a pastor, few things hurt more than seeing people show up to your church, then leaving as quickly as they came. Some leave without reason. There are many reasons why this may occur. A few are as follows: either they were made to feel bad for some reason—perhaps a conviction through the preached Word; or they were made to feel bad by another person; or perhaps they felt out of place; or the service was boring and they felt no connection. Whatever the reason, the church is a market that is unforgiving. When you lose a customer, it is unlikely you will recover from that loss.

Every church experiences attrition to one degree or another. People die, backslide, get upset, and move. It appears the churches that are structured, traditional, and filled with protocols are not growing, stagnant, or losing members. It also appears that all churches are not suffering. The nondenominational churches seem to have growth. In some cases, there are not enough seats so the ushers place chairs in the aisles. In these churches, there is no choir and the congregations serve as the music ministry and half of the worship service is filled with praise and worship music. There are no announcements but a small piece of paper with the church news on it, or a short motivational commercial on the large screen, accentuating what is happening in and around the church. The rest of the information can be accessed online and one of the biggest things that is appreciated is all this done and them do not have to wear their Sundays best. The sermon last only one-hour as well.

The information in this study is anticipated to be incorporated into the doctoral project by presenting a combination of different characteristics from the traditional and nontraditional churches to include certain aspects of each of their models. The goal is to show there is not one correct method to correct the problem but to constantly incorporate

resources and adjust the models to reach continual increasing results. The study information is foundation to the project because the methodologies to be incorporated with methods that made the church strong were the good traditions that provided stability and strength, and what revived the church is innovative ability to become multi-functional, and interchangeable through calculated risk.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

In this chapter the results of the project analysis are presented. The data were collected and then analyzed in exploring the hypothesis that if the church honors its tradition through the Word of God, the church and community will flourish, and the church will experience abundant growth through God's agape love. When God's love is visible in the people of the church and the community, both of their needs are met and they are provided an abundant life through God's provisions. The hypothesis identified in the ministry context revealed Mount Olive Baptist Church located in Rectortown, Virginia is among the many churches across America that are in decline with participation and membership. There are a number of possibilities why these things are happening. It could be anything from poor leadership, to being locked into the traditions of the past or simply a change in demographics in the community. With certainty it can be said, without a paradigm shift, within the next decade the membership will not be able to sustain the church because of the rapid decline.

To address this problem, qualitative narrative research methods were considered. There are a number of different connotations that are commonly connected to the use of the terms narrative research, narrative inquiry, and narrative analysis that intersect and contribute to the qualitative design chosen for this project. To capture priceless information from another person's memory can be complexed and multilayered. One of

the goals of this chapter is to work through some of those complexities by following methodical procedures when working with narratives that are built on insights gleaned from the experiences of others with similar personal and professional contextual issues. When the story is told, it is communicated in “narrative form” so the experience can become alive. Without knowing it, as the story is told the story teller position characters and situations in a very broad sense, while giving order to their personal experience so it can make sense. In other words, they attempt to put language and mental pictures together to normalize what has occurred in their life experience. There is an immeasurable amount of information and data that are hidden underneath the narratives of others that go undiscovered until extracted through interviews. As this project closes in on its final chapter, there is a great expectation of new discoveries through this qualitative research that will help us understand the story of others.

This chapter is divided into five sections and is alphabetically organized. Section A, entitled “The Role of the Researcher,” which provides information about the researcher and their role in gathering, analyzing and interpreting data collected through voluntary individual interviews that are non-quantitative. Section B, entitled “Methodology,” will address what approach was used to gather the data. Section C, entitled “Implementations,” will address how and when the data was processed. Section D, entitled “Summary of Learning,” will address what information was learned from the analyzed data and how that data discounts, supports or strengthens the hypothesis. Finally, Section E, entitled “Reflections and Conclusions,” will address how all the elements of the project come together and answer the question of whether the project worked or failed.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a native of Detroit, Michigan and is a retired Marine who served twenty-one years of active duty of honorable service. He is also a retired chef of a sole-proprietorship, with certifications from the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York, and Johnson and Wales University, Providence, Rhode Island. His undergraduate degree is in Organizational Management from Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland and Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia. He began pastoring at the context in June of 2012. As a bi-vocational pastor, he is also a contract specialist for the United States government. He brings a wealth of information, knowledge and experience to the research project being well-rounded in various walks of life. He has extensive experience in advising senior echelon military personnel and was sought out by them to become a part of their staff because of his diplomacy skills. His experience with leadership, strategic planning, situational awareness and his service was an important asset with communicating and working with his peer, contextual, and professional associates in bringing the targeted research project to a successful conclusion.

An essential step in the doctoral process was for a proposal to be submitted and to pass candidacy review where after a thorough review of all supporting documentation, permission was granted to proceed with collecting research to strengthen, weaken or reject the hypothesis. With the hope of passing candidacy review, in July of 2017, candidates were sought out to become participants in the project research. The researcher targeted senior pastors, retired pastors, mainline and non-traditional pastors and church leadership of congregations of various membership sizes. All of the potential candidates

were located in the Washington, Maryland and Virginia (DMV) vicinity. A small sample of ten candidates agreed to participate in the study with the agreement their identity and context would remain anonymous.

In qualitative studies, researchers have a big responsibility and play many different roles. It is argued that qualitative research that deals with sensitive topics in depth can pose emotional and other risks to both participant and researcher. Clear protocols for dealing with distress should be in place so that both parties involved in research can use them if necessary. It is not usually easy to predict what topics are likely to lead to distress, and the researcher should therefore be prepared to defuse a situation if it occurs.¹ It is noted in the above paragraph of the researcher having broad experience in dealing with all levels of complexities, in addition, a consent form was signed by the participants with an agreement they would willingly engage in the research and that they could terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable. The form also stated that the participants would agree to have the interview sessions audio recorded as it is unethical to surprise participants with a recording device at the interview. This disclosure also served to notify them that all of their responses were to remain confidential and used for the expressed intention of dissertation research purposes only. The researcher maintained the academic integrity of the seminary, as well as maintain personal ethical compliance regarding the delivery and testing of this research.

¹Angelica Orb, Laurel Eisenhauer, and Dianne Wynaden, "Ethics in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 33, no. 1 (2001): 93-96.

Methodology

Approach to Gathering Data

This specific study used a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It was used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of both the researcher and the participant. It provided insights into the problem and helped develop ideas to revisit the hypotheses over and over until the hypotheses perhaps began to strengthen, weaken, or change. Qualitative research was also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, to allow a deeper dive into the problem. That deeper dive is based on a philosophical orientation call phenomenology, which focuses on the experiences of people from their perspective.²

The data collection methods varied using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. This study used focus groups, individual interviews both spoken and written, recordings and observations. The qualitative narrative research approach was used to collect the data for this project because it tends to focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who live them.³ It allows the researcher to collect information and study the lives of individuals as they provide segments of their past.⁴ That information is rewritten by the researcher and often in the end the participants' narrative is combined with views of the researchers' life in a collaborative narrative.

² Carol M. Roberts, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and defending Your Dissertation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 143.

³ Kjell E. Rudestam and Rae R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Context and Process* (Fielding Graduate University, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015), 38.

⁴ R. Lyle Duque, "Review: Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008). Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences. CA, USA: SAGE Publications," accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1418/2906#g4>.

Process for Conducting Interviews

The data collection methods varied using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. This study used focus groups, individual interviews both spoken and written, recordings and observations. The qualitative narrative research approach was used to collect the data for this project because it tends to focus on understanding experiences from the point of view of those who live them.⁵

The researcher's goal was to capture a series of narrative interviews and stories of clergy persons from different denominations with congregations of various sizes, and to question them on how tradition has affected their lives and the lives of their churches. Many of the questions to be asked during the research and data collection phase consisted of open-ended verbs to encourage an opportunity for the participants to be unrestricted in their answers. Some questions were expected to emerge from the testimonies and stories from the narrative interview. The questions were provided in advance to the participants so they would have the opportunity to offer a response with conscience and substance. The researcher confirmed in advance to reserve the right to follow-up with sub-questions. The questions addressed during the collection phase was as follows:

1. Can you elaborate on your experience with tradition in your personal life?
2. Can you elaborate on your experience with tradition in your church?
3. Can you share a tradition you would eliminate in the church and describe why?
4. Can you share your thoughts on how the church should affect the community?
5. Does your church look like the community?

⁵ Rudestam and Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation*, 38.

6. Can you elaborate on why church membership is declining in America?
7. Please speak openly on any issues you would like?

Originally there were ten questions selected for the interview process. During the interviews the number of questions were reduced to seven because some of the questions bled into other questions. Also, there was too much data being collected and the researcher had to cut back on questioning. Lastly, the questions were reduced because the interviews were becoming timely as the participant were not lacking in conversation.

Reasons for Choosing Approach

The researcher utilized a qualitative narrative research method to explain, clarify and elaborate the meanings of different aspects of the participant's life experience. The researcher interpreted the narratives interviews and collected data, discussed them with the focus groups searching for areas of commonality that could either support or weaken the hypothesis. The interviews were conducted at various locations of the participants choosing. Some of the interview dates were adjusted to satisfy the schedules of the participants. The researcher also attended one workshop, Bible study entitled, "Slavery, Tradition and the Church" every Wednesday at a church in Alexandria, Virginia that lasted for three consecutive weeks in the month of November. The results were discussed among the focus groups.

This qualitative narrative research approach was the researcher's preference because it tended to be a discovery-oriented approach to collecting data. As much as I wanted to enter into the interview without any bias, thoughts were always in the back of my head of what I imagined the participants' responses would be. To my surprise, my

closed mindedness was opened by many of the experiences the participants had encountered in their personal and professional lives. I was amazed after many of the interviews were finished, the participants ended up thanking me for the opportunity for being a part of the study. Not only did the interview provide the data I needed for the study, it was apparent it served as a healing balm to the participants.

For most people, storytelling is a natural way of recounting an experience, a practical way of solving a fundamental problem in life, or creating some type of reasonable order out of an experience.⁶ For me as the researcher, I chose this method because sometimes numbers do not add up to tell the complete truth. For instance, when I was in the Marines, I constantly had problems of being over-weight according to their standards. This was an issue with most of the black Marines in my platoon. When standing side by side with a white Marine whose weight was equal to mine, He looked much bigger and huskier because of the body-weight index (BMI) chart used by the Armed Services. This chart showed that muscle weighs more than fat. The black Marines were more muscular and leaner than the white Marines, thus we constantly found it difficult to maintain our weight.

The choice of qualitative narrative research is established as the preference of the researcher and is confirmed even the more as a real-time event unfolds as the project is being written. The world was taken back by the 2016 Presidential election with Donald Trump beating out Hillary Clinton to become the forty-fifth President of the United States. The primus is he won the election because of Russian interference. There is a special prosecutor in charge of interviewing people key to providing evidence in the case

⁶M. F. Connelly and J. D. Clandinin, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 5 (1990): 2-14.

to uncover campaign corruption or collusion. It is narrative testimonies that are keeping the investigation alive as new information is extracted from the narrative stories constantly. All the polls had the election won by Hillary Clinton across the United States. Somehow the numbers did not add up. Clinton won the popular vote, but Trump won the electoral vote. Numbers do not always tell the whole truth.⁷

To qualify my decision even more and strengthen the notion in that quantitative research data does not tell a complete story, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the unemployment rate for black Americans is the lowest it has been since the year 2000, seventeen years ago at 6.8 percent. Despite significant progress, unemployment for black Americans today is still far higher than other groups. White unemployment was 3.7 percent in December; Asian unemployment was 2.5 percent; and Hispanic joblessness was 4.9 percent. Qualitative results can also become manipulated if used in the wrong context. While it is true that the black unemployment rate recently reached its lowest level in decades, the rate has been in steady decline for about the last seven years.⁸

Implementation

The narrative inquiry is a complex and dynamic methodology. The researcher and the participant constantly negotiate the meaning of the stories by providing validation

⁷ Andrew Mercer, Claudia Deane, and Kyley McGeeney, “Why 2016 Election Polls Missed Their Mark,” accessed January 22, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/why-2016-election-polls-missed-their-mark/>.

⁸ Robert Farley, “Trump Takes Undue Credit on Black Unemployment,” accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.factcheck.org/2018/01/trump-takes-undue-credit-black-unemployment/>.

checks throughout the collection and analysis.⁹ As the researcher, being new to this process, the interviews were approached not knowing what to expect. The researcher was extremely humbled that ten voluntary participants would become vulnerable to the researcher by trusting him with their information and exposing their personal and professional experiences.

How Was the Project Implemented?

The art of writing is like any other art, it has to be practiced, thus social research demands continuous writing. The writing had to continue even if the final structure and layout of work did not make sense. Taking good notes and maintaining a field diary was imperative because as constant return to the researcher's notes was necessary to keep the project focused.¹⁰ As the interviews happened the researcher became very comfortable with the process because it reminded him of the culinary experience and the art of cooking. A chef in many instances will not see the outcome of the dish immediately. In the beginning, things may seem as though they are not going to come together in the galley, however, the chef or researcher in the case of this project, must continue to trust the process sometimes referring back to cooking or research notes for reassurance, clarifications and adjustments. It became noticeable that the more the researcher interviewed participants, the better and easier the process got. The plate came together as other participants were interviewed. For example, someone else's story filled in the plate

⁹ John Creswell and Dana Miller, "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry," *Theory into Practice* 39, no. 3 (2000): 124-130.

¹⁰ Carl Sundberg, "A Personal Experience of Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Missiological Research," *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 85, no. 3-4 (1997): 269-282, accessed December 12, 2017, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

with a starch, a vegetable, a protein, and of course a dessert. The end result of the data collected in the research made the conclusion appealing. One story in itself did not have the framework to support the hypothesis; however, a combination of perspectives brought some sense to moving in the right direction so the narrative could be rewritten.

In this study, narrative analysis as a research methodology was applied. Bruner raised two types of cognition: paradigmatic, which operates by recognizing elements as members of a category; and narrative, which operates by combining elements into an emplotted story. Paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry gathers stories for its data and uses paradigmatic analytic procedures to produce groupings and categories out of the common elements across a database.¹¹ To make it plain, the hope of this study was to find a common point of agreement or a convergence point of all the participants to support or strengthen the hypothesis. The recordings and notes obtained during the interview process were extremely valuable in helping in that stage in the research because there was a considerable amount of distance between the time data was collected and the analysis of the data. It was very helpful to have bullet points noting the facial expressions and body language of the participants connecting this to their voices on the recordings. Accessing these journals at a later date after the interview allowed the researcher to revisit the experience as if the interview had just taken place.

After all the data was collected and the analysis phase began, the initial thought was that the process would be fairly easy because the theory concerning the church in a decline is prominent throughout America. The church is in decline in America because of etc... I thought the culprit that was killing the church could be pinpointed, and the case

¹¹ Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 8, no. 1 (1995).

would be closed. The initial analysis was that deductive reasoning would support the thoughts and would be validated because the conclusion to the problem seemed logical and that basic reasoning defied questioning.¹² This was not the case because it was the exact opposite. The validation sided with inductive reasoning. As the analysis of the data proceeded, it was amazing to see how the extracted information supported and drove the theory. Basically, the knowledge obtained from the data began to form the conclusion to support and strengthen the hypothesis.¹³

Where the Project Was Implemented

As the project moved to the interview phase, the calendar (RF-Cal) was adhered to as much as possible. On two occasions the researcher had to call the participant on the phone after the interview for clarification. The questions presented to the participants was reduced from ten questions to seven questions because of the large quantity of data collected. The interviews were held individually and at a venue of the participants' choice. This agreement was made to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible to allow room for maximum data collection in a relaxed setting. Some of the sessions were held in the participants' office, some at restaurants over breakfast and dinettes over lunch and dinner. Some interviews were held in libraries and one was held on a park bench. A discursive space was created even though people may have been just two booths over drinking coffee. What was most important is the researcher and participant

¹² N. J. Vyhmeister and T. D. Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 105.

¹³ Alina Bradford, "Live Science Contributor," accessed January 14, 2018, <https://www.livescience.com/21569-deduction-vs-induction.html>.

relationship was strong enough to open up a conversation in almost any location that was mutual.

RF – Cal	PROJECT CALENDAR
DATE	ACTIVITY
Jan 2017	Meet with context and professional associates
Jan 2017	Discussed narrative research model with mentors
Apr 2017	Conduct a needs analysis
July 2017	Begin confirming prospects for quantitative research
July 2017	Tele-conference meeting with context and professional associates
Aug 2017	Develop questions for narrative interview with professional associates
Aug 2017	Seek confirmation of direction of project from mentors
Sept 2017	Notify selected prospects of agreed dates to be interviewed
Sept 2017	Conduct meeting with context and contextual and professional associates
Oct 2017	Conduct narrative interviews with pastors and church leaders
Nov 2017	Conduct meeting with context and professional associates to discuss interview experience data collection
Nov 2017	Attended workshop on slavery, tradition and the church at a Northern Virginia church (3 sessions) / reviewed Dr. A. Waller, President Lott Cary at lecture Nation Baptist Convention on a “A Conversation on Church Growth and Millennials”
Dec 2017	Develop short strategic plan for the church
Dec 2017	Conduct meeting with professional associates to discuss and critique strategic plan
Jan 2018	Evaluate project, write research paper, documentation of the results of the project

A final meeting was unable to take place because of a medical issue with the researcher during the months of January and February 2018. However, an evaluation form was electronically sent to the participants and returned to be incorporated in this study. A peer

debriefing was done over the telephone as well thanking them for their participation and reassuring them of the disposal of all materials used to obtain data.

Summary of Learning

The goal of this part of chapter six is to address what information was learned from the analyzed data and how that data discounts, supports or strengthens the hypothesis. Based on what was discovered during the data collection phase of the study, the participant's life experiences are placed into a theoretical framework.¹⁴ This framework is the structure that will support the hypothesis, that if the church honors tradition through the Word of God, then the church and community will flourish and experience abundant growth through God's agape love. This framework will be the lens that will provide the opportunity to look at why churches across America are rapidly declining. Eighty percent of the churches in America are not growing, and approximately eight churches a day closes its doors. Without a paradigm shift, within the next decade the membership will not be able to sustain the church. The theoretical lens of tradition will be used for evaluation.

The Data Collection

Going into this study it was thought the answer to the problem was clear cut and deductive, however, as the data began to materialize from the interviews it was realized the reasoning was more inductive because of the clarity emerging from the variables of

¹⁴ Roberts, *A Dissertation Journey*, 129.

the questionings.¹⁵ The relationship between interviewer and candidate normally is not ready to go directly into details right off the bat. It takes time to build rapport and establish some common ground while making the individual feel welcome as those things are critical to the relationship-building process and are supposed to help during the interview.¹⁶ The first question was designed for the participants to let their guard down because many of them did not know what to expect (see forms RF PP-2, 4). It was clear some of them felt reluctant in allowing me to interview them. It is possible most of the participants agreed to the interview because they felt obligated as a friend or colleague. There is no doubt it was speculation if they could trust me with their information, or if they would lose all respect because of their getting too emotional or vulnerable. So putting on my traditional glasses, I presented them with question one:

- (1) Can you elaborate on your experience with tradition in your personal life?
 - *Research Participant (RP-2)* immediately relaxed and his disposition became agreeable. He started talking about being raised in the south and how egg custard pie was a family tradition. He emphasized his children are experts at making the pie. He also mentioned that he is a fourth-generation Baptist preacher and being a preacher is natural and feel it is embedded in his DNA. It was a surprise to find out that forty percent of the participants in this project are pastor kids (pk).
 - *Research Participant (RP-9)* got emotional when remembering how being raised as a (pk), discipline in their house was not taken lightly. They had to always be on

¹⁵ Vyhmeister and Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers*, 105.

¹⁶ Paul Falcone, “Interview Ice Breakers: 7 Questions to Segue into Meaningful Candidate Conversations,” accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/interview-ice-breakers-7-questions-to-segue-into-meaningful-candidate-conversations.aspx>.

their best behavior and had to always address adults with yes sir and yes ma'am or he and his siblings would get in big trouble.

- *Research Participant (RP-4)* spoke of tradition in the broader sense of community. He says when he thinks of tradition personally he is reminded of how valuable it is to our culture. America is who we are because of the traditions people bring to its shores.
 - *Research Participant (RP-8)* got teary-eyed when talking about Thanksgiving dinner at home with momma. Everyone, no matter where you were would make it home. That was the only time the family would see each other. As much as he has attempted to imitate the tradition since his mother's passing, he or anyone else in the family has had no success. He states, "We must find another tradition to honor."
- (2) Can you elaborate on your experience with tradition in your church?
- *Research Participant (RP-1)* appreciates tradition because it provides structure for the church. He says without the structure or doctrine and a solid theological foundation such as the eighteen Baptist Articles of Faith, and affiliations with national conventions, the Baptist church would be all over the map. In fact, he stated this is why some non-denominational churches seem unorderly and lacking in protocols with holding worship service for long periods of time. He stated although Baptist are autonomous, they still have structure.
 - *Research Participant (RP-3)* recalled growing up in the rural south and church was held only two Sundays a month, however Sunday school was held every

week. He has a vivid memory of attending Sunday school and it was not an option for him and his siblings. He remembers looking forward to the Christmas and Easter programs at church and getting a bag of goodies with candy, apples, oranges, and he remembers the egg hunts.

- *Research Participant (RP-8)* shares that the world is so involved in everything and in many ways mixed up and confused, they look forward to coming into the church that is orderly and focused and peaceful. It is a breath of fresh air.
- (3) Can you share a tradition you would eliminate in the church and describe why?
- *Research Participant (RP-1)* suggest he would change the dress code. He was raised to go to church with your “Sunday’s Best” on. He had friends that would not come to church with him because they did not have a suit or nice shoes to wear. He is positive there are tons of people not attending church because church can become too churchy.
 - *Research Participant (RP-6)* says they would change the way Christian Education is filtered through the church. It is challenging to see church Sunday school attendance is dropping, the Baptist Training Union is dead and almost non-existent and Bible study is hanging on by a thread. The point was highlighted the need to try things that a non-traditional, new and unorthodox. There was a strong emphasis on changing how women clergy are viewed and the disappointment that mainstream denominations have not moved beyond realizing God can call whomsoever he will to preach the Gospel.

- *Research Participants (RP-2,3,5,7,8,9,10)* overwhelmingly stated they would eliminate the church constitution. Their stories differed but they all admit this document has been a nightmare to their ministries. It stands in the way of budgets, missions work, and benevolence when attempting to help people outside of the church, and believe it or not, compensation for the pastor's salary or a retirement package. They feel the church constitution has stifled development and has become a source of contention and has supplanted the authority of the Bible. One pastor goes on to say he feels his parishioners study the constitution more than the Bible because they know it like the back of their hands. He feels sometimes the legalism or legality of a constitution is more concrete and reassuring than a faith-walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - *Research Participant (RP-4)* states, he grew up going to church all day on Sunday and it put a bitter taste in his mouth. Annual days, rally days, homecomings', anniversaries etc... He questions are all these biblical? Are all these necessary? These days were used as money swopping mechanisms between congregations. I will gladly get rid of annual days.
- (4) Can you share your thoughts on how the church should affect the community?
- *Research Participant (RP-8)* shares that whatever the church is doing, it must be relevant to the community it is in. He mentioned when Jesus was talking to farmers, he did not mention fish. He states Jesus, always met people where they were.

- *Research Participant (RP-2)* states, the church should be open and may or may not reflect and affect the persons in the community. He states, his community is undergoing gentrification the church represents the historical identity but not necessarily the demographic identity of the community. Although the church has remained the same and the community has changed, the church continues in an effort to be sensitive and recognize the pulse of the community through meeting their need with daycare, after-school care, mentoring programs, and local food and clothing banks. They have also met a county standard to be a local emergency shelter. He says it is imperative that the church becomes a refuge for the community.
- *Research Participant (RP-6)* states, context has partnered with the neighborhood to develop a community garden and it has been one of the most rewarding efforts the church has adopted. This gesture may not augment the church membership but it has brought the community closer together by people talking and sharing. Because the garden is helping the community to become healthier, ultimately the church will become healthier. People do not have to come into the church or the church to impact their lives. The church is simply supposed to be a vehicle of liberation for all people.
- *Research Participant (RP-9)* says that the church should bring families together. The church was once the community. Everyone in the community belonged to the same church and very few did not attend church. Career paths have caused some to move from the community church.

(5) Does your church look like the community?

- *Research Participant ten (RP -10)* shares yes, yes oh yes! Thank God we have chosen the right option. He profoundly states that churches have two options. They must become museums or missions. Museums highlight the past and the dead, where missions preserve and accentuate the living. One keeps the dead living and the other stops the living from dying. He says his church invites the people outside of the doors inside of the house and have changed the communities' perspective about church.
- *Research Participant (RP-5)* says, yes! We have just renovated this 150-year-old church into a modern-day community healing station. The church is located in a historical district and is designated as being registered as a historic structure that cannot be altered on the outside. However, on the inside, the church has become a place where the community wants to come and be a part of something new. We have lost our pulpit because no one was approaching it. We have gained a stage because people want to be close to it.
- *Research Participant (RP-1)* this pastor was very comfortable in saying no, we do not look like the community we are in! He goes on to explain, that his context does not lend itself to its surrounding because the community do not want to look like the church. He says what was initially an African American community in the 1960's was bought out by developers that gave black families \$100,000.00 for their property, and all the homes were torn down to build \$1,000,000.00 homes. The church remained and is sustained only because members commuting back into the community for their worship experience. As much as the church has

reached out the community has not reached in. The church continues to allow the facility to be a voting center and they have an annual cookout for the community.

No the church does not resemble the community.

- *Research Participant (RP-8)* has a similar experience were the church has moved from a community church to a commuter church. Nearly eighty percent of the members travel a great distance to worship. He says when parents passed away, the children did not keep the property but moved from the community. They return Sunday after Sunday out of tradition.

(6) Can you elaborate on why church membership is declining in America?

- *Research Participant seven (RP-7)* says the Roman Catholic church is in decline all over the world with the exception of Latin America countries and Africa. The premise is people are now educated and knowledgeable and have gotten in the way of faith. In the past where education and knowledge was generated out of the home, it is now generated out of institutions. Good health, moral values and culture came out of the home and our communities in the past. Those times are quickly corroding as the traditional face of family and marriage are changing.
- *Research Participant (RP-3)* says technology has played a significant role in the decline of church attendance. We use to joke around about “bedside Baptist” where people would stay in bed on Sunday. Everyone is now streaming their church services and are giving their financial contributions online. Why do they need to come to church and spend hours away from home? People can have religion without having relationship.

- *Research Participant (RP-4)* says that the church is dying because it is not willing to change. I think it is hard to compete with so many other churches so if a member is not happy here, they will go there. It is so important to communicate with your congregation to see how they want their church to look. Leadership in church should have term limitations. There are some church leaders that have served in the same position for decades and think they are the only one that can do the job. They have not sought to mentor younger parishioners to move into their positions.

(7) Please speak openly on any issues you would like?

- *Research Participant (RP-5)* was compelled to speak with passion about America having two issues that are reaching their pinnacle. Racism and greed are boiling over and spilling all over the nation. How much is enough? How many homes and cars are enough? Both racism and greed are against the principles of God. If America does not address their wrongs with justice, God will address America with His wrath. The participant states, we are still baffled concerning the 2016 Presidential election with Trump. We all need to watch and pray because the end is near. How does this play into tradition? You had better hold on tight to what you believe and I hope what you believe is the right thing.
- *Research Participant (RP-2)* went in great detail expressing thoughts on how the traditional church is going to have to deal with the gay and lesbian communities. How can the church be loving without becoming judgmental? Can the church be Christian and loving, and open and forgiving even though the church sees this as

an aberrant and irregular lifestyle. Do we have deeper social fears or are our preferences revealing of a deeper theological anxiety? I am wondering if the black church can still recognize that we came into existence affirm black identity. The question is now, can we see humanity in our gay brothers and sisters? As Malcolm used to say “we catch hell not because we are black Baptist, or black Methodists’, or black Catholics’, or black Republicans’, or black Democrats’; we catch hell because we are black.” The job of the church is not to condemn people; the job of the church is to love people.

- *Research Participant (RP-4)* states, I think the climate of the United States concerning standing for the National Anthem is a test of who we really are as a people and what we believe as a nation. Is the constitution a document for all the people or for a select group of people? It all depends who that group is. There are people that burn the flag and are protected under the first amendment, however, a black athlete takes a knee during the playing of a racist song is causing an uproar. We are living in a place where Congress can near curse out the first Black President and no one does anything, but the current White President tells lies, talks down to ethnic groups, throws temper tantrums, disrespects women and is praised for it. We are in trouble.
- *Research Participant (RP-4)* Our youth are the foundation and future of the church; this is not new. What is new are the family values of today’s church. We have allowed our youth to dictate to their parents when and where we will go to church. The family values of the past gave no opportunity for the youth of the church to choose whether to worship. Worship was a way of life.

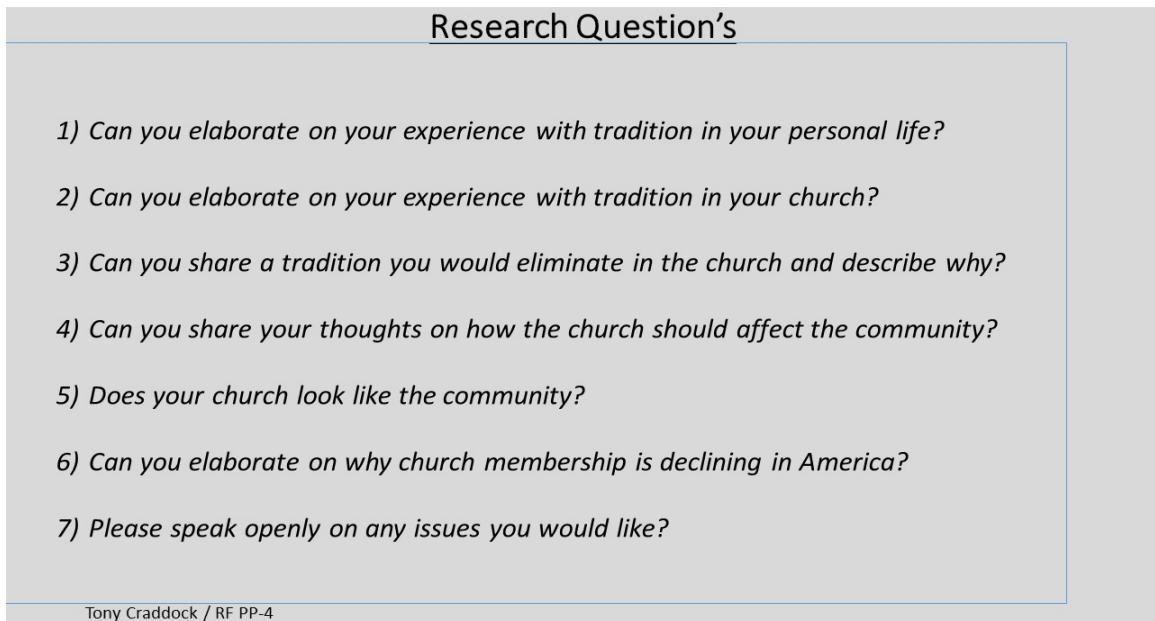


Figure 1. Research questions

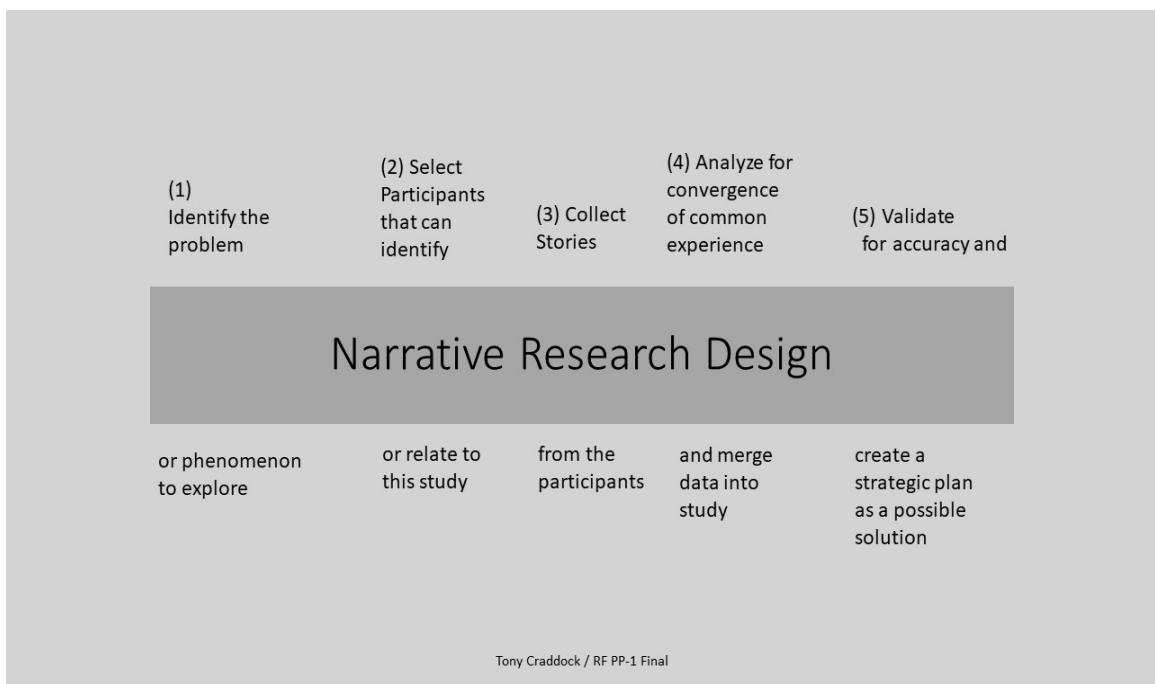


Figure 2. Narrative research design

This illustration is the collection of data process during the interview process. The information was recorded and notes were taken over a two-month period.

What Was Learned

The data collected was extensive and of great value. The researcher did not expect to obtain so much information to support the study. The abundance of information not only supports the hypothesis but provides room for further inquiry. For the researcher to have a treasure chest of information and knowledge that emerged from this study tells a few things:

- The participants needed to tell their stories and church leaders needed an outlet
- Every question took on its own identity in a different context
- The participants all had serious concerns about the future of the church
- Everyone admitted they could do more to connect with their community
- Everyone is deeply disturbed about the course of the United States



Figure 3. Narrative research analysis

This illustration showed every question was different with various responses. Question seven was an open-ended question that was not intended to be measured, however, surprisingly many of the participants commented on the racial tone in America.

Ways the Hypothesis Was Supported

In my opinion, once data was gathered and analyzed, the hypothesis was indeed supported that if the church honors tradition through the Word of God, then the church and the community will experience abundant growth through God's agape love.

As all the information came together, it was a big maze until an inductive reasoning and paradigmatic analysis pointed in the area where question three began to coagulate.¹⁷ The church constitution became a focal point. The data convergence point was emerging and intersecting with a problem nearly all the participants was experiencing. The document that governs the church should be the Bible and not the church constitution. All the participants agreed the constitution has stood in the way of allowing simple ministry to go forth. The narrative accounts of the participants when presented with the questions endorsed the hypothesis. A triangular analysis was also applied to validate findings (see RF PP-5). Data collected through a traditional lens pointed to the institute of the church constitution with being out of touch with whom it is representing. That data was confirmed with my professional and peer associates along with being weighed against the researcher's context as my personal experience as a pastor.

¹⁷ Alina Bradford, "Live Science, Deductive Reasoning vs. Inductive Reasoning," accessed January 14, 2018, <https://www.livescience.com/21569-deduction-vs-induction.html>.

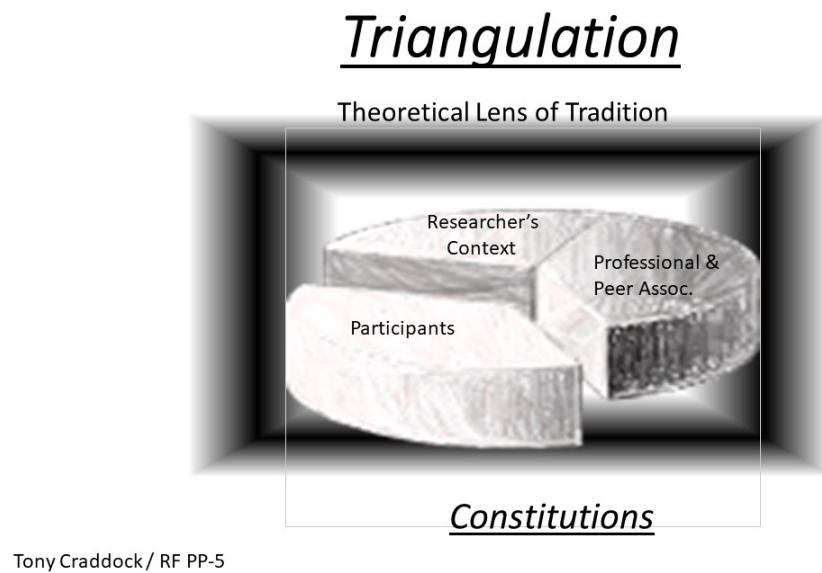


Figure 4. Triangulation

Conclusion

How Well Did the Project Work?

This portion of chapter six pulls everything together and provides a snapshot of the total project. Unlike quantitative research that measures, it is simply impossible to measure someone's story. The researcher was able to make sense of the participants' life experiences when certain answers began to look and sound alike. The eye-opening moment was when those same answers resembled the researcher's personal contextual experience. This was confirmation that the project was headed in the right direction. How well did it work? The researcher cannot tell the reader because the project and testing of a power point presentation remains to be seen because it is continuous.



Figure 5. Strategic pillars connecting the church and community

The strategic plan is a generic plan that cuts against the grain of traditional plans. The study showed that what the church had been doing has shown little to no results because there is a steady decline. Traditionally, strategic plans are large and complex. The plan presented is streamline and gets right to the point. This is a simple five-pillar structured plan. It has scripture at its foundation.

Structure

- A simple structured plan is need for a solid foundation so the church can operate and do ministry first inwardly then outwardly
- The plan should consist of a Constitution and ByLaws - A church's constitution can safeguard the integrity of leaders while expressing the will of the congregation while giving both guidance, principles, and procedures to follow so that there are certain expectations for everyone in the church. A church constitution is binding upon its pastor and members because it is a legal document, especially if the church is incorporated under the laws of the state in which it is found.
- The principle is to keep the constitution simple. There are only ten things you need in a constitution. They are:
 - Name
 - Statement of faith
 - Standing
 - Purpose
 - Membership
 - Property rights
 - Government
 - Officers
 - Bylaws**
 - Amendments
- The basic constitution should not change that much. Where most of the changes made is in the bylaws and amendments section. The bylaws should be a dynamic document that is constantly changing as your church grows.
- I Corinthians 14:33 - For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.²

Figure 6. Structure

The data overwhelmingly was having issues with the constitution and would love to disregard it. This cannot and should not be done. It provides protection and order for the church. The problem is they are too large with too much language. The plan must remain small and simple.

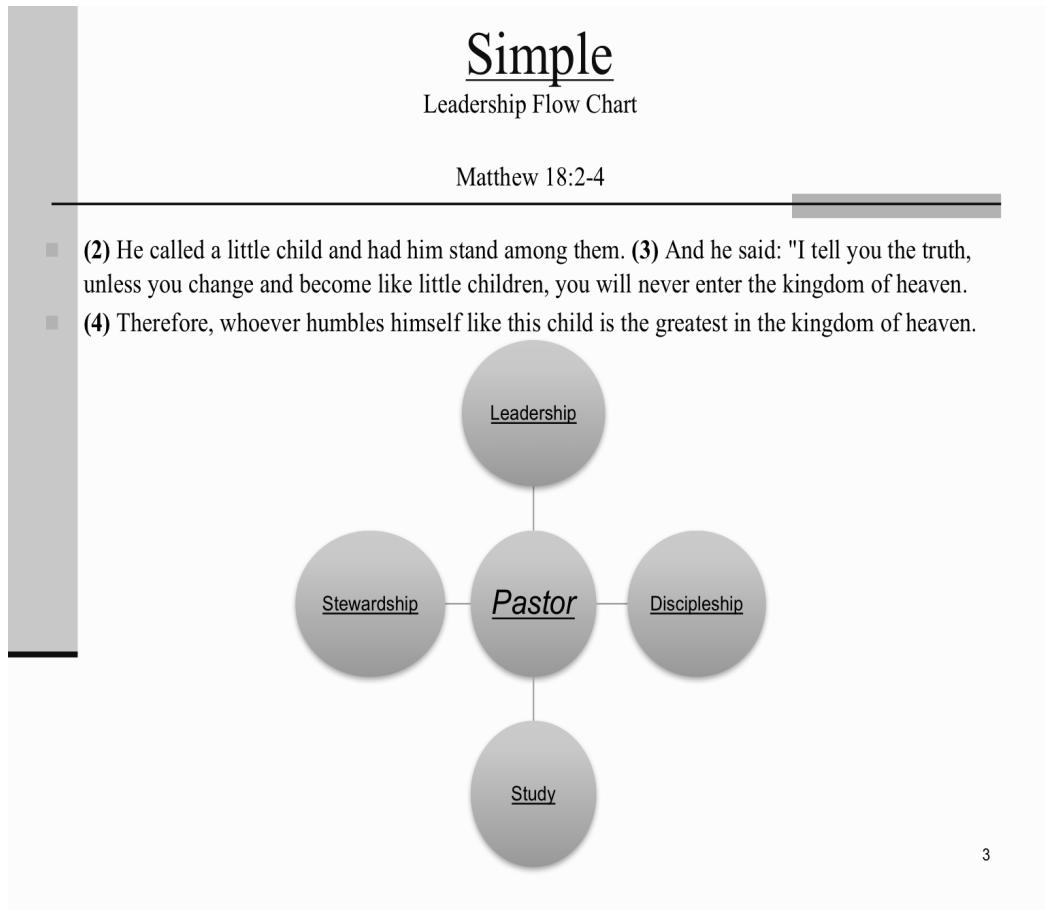


Figure 7. Simple leadership flow chart

There is a reason why Jesus connected the Kingdom of Heaven to children in the scriptures (Matt 19:14). Most of the issues we have in church are because we do not keep things simple. We make salvation difficult when He did all the work. Traditionally, pastors think the larger the administrative chart the more important the ministry. Once again, we can learn from the Lord to keep it simple because if we humble ourselves, we will be exalted (Matt 18:2-4). The chart illustrates only five slots to represent the church. Notice how money is last on the priority list. If leadership is training by the Bible and they are being challenged by the word of God consistently, giving will transpire and money will never be an issue in the church.

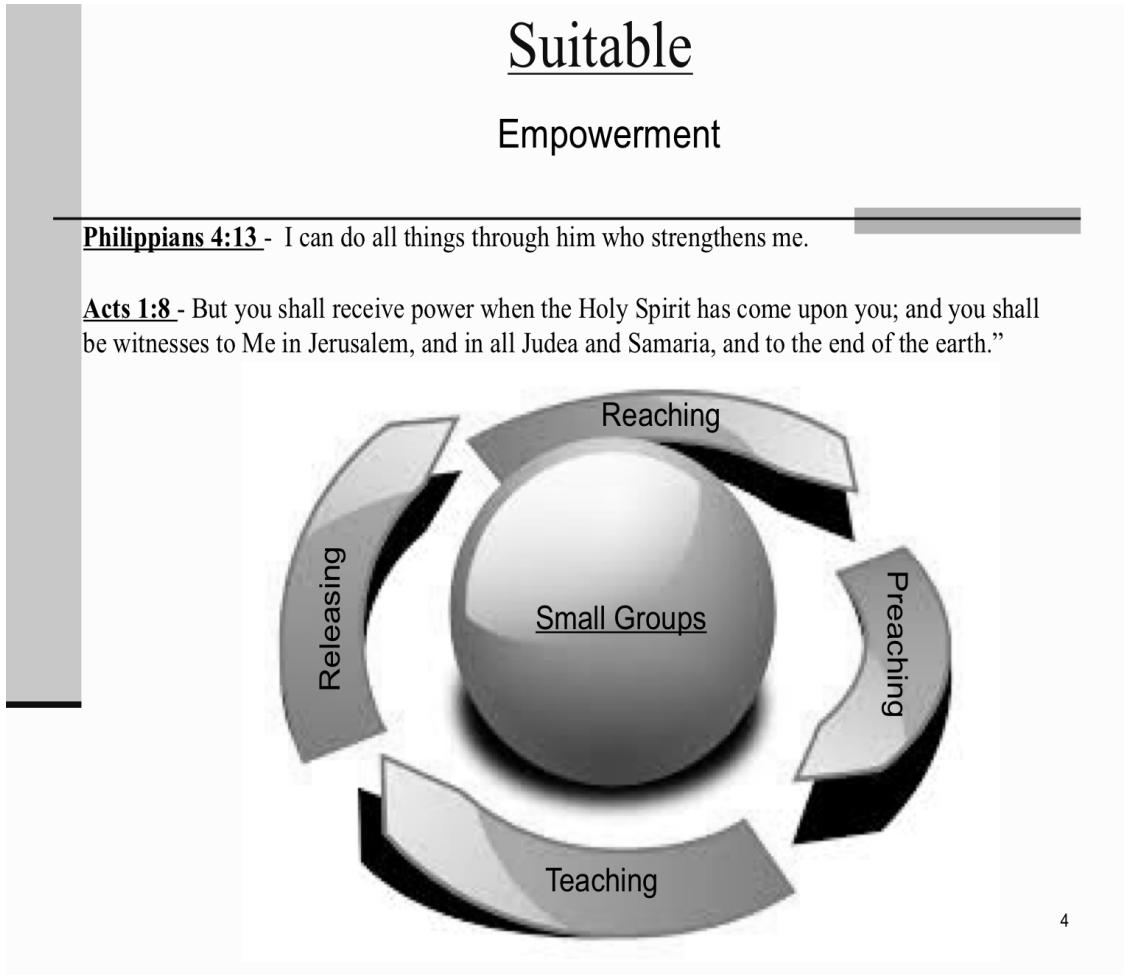


Figure 8. Suitable empowerment

The strategic plan must be structured, simple, suitable and make sense. The plan must be achievable. A paradigm shift is drastically needed and the data showed the plans that are in place now are not working in the traditional church. However, most churches are now in decline. The non-traditional churches are moving in the other direction. There is a reason for this! When you look at the appearance of the churches many of them are not brick and mortar but shopping malls, warehouses and community centers. The chart above does not have ministries but small groups. Research shows churches with ministries are on decline but churches that have small groups are growing out of the

seams. The model is no longer what traditional churches have practiced in the past which is reach the people, teach the people and keep the people. The new model is designed to reach the people, preach the people, teach the people and release the people. The idea is you do not invest in them to lock them up, you invest in them to cut them loose. Small groups are the new way of doing church. Ministries cost money and small groups do not. Someone may join your ministry if they can fit in or are accepted in a ministry, or that ministry is all the church is offering, whereas interest-based small groups have like-minded people that golf, swim, cook, exercise, knit, read, fish and so on. You do not have to finance what I like to do. The churches, particularly the mega-churches that are bursting at the seams, do not have ministries, they have small groups.

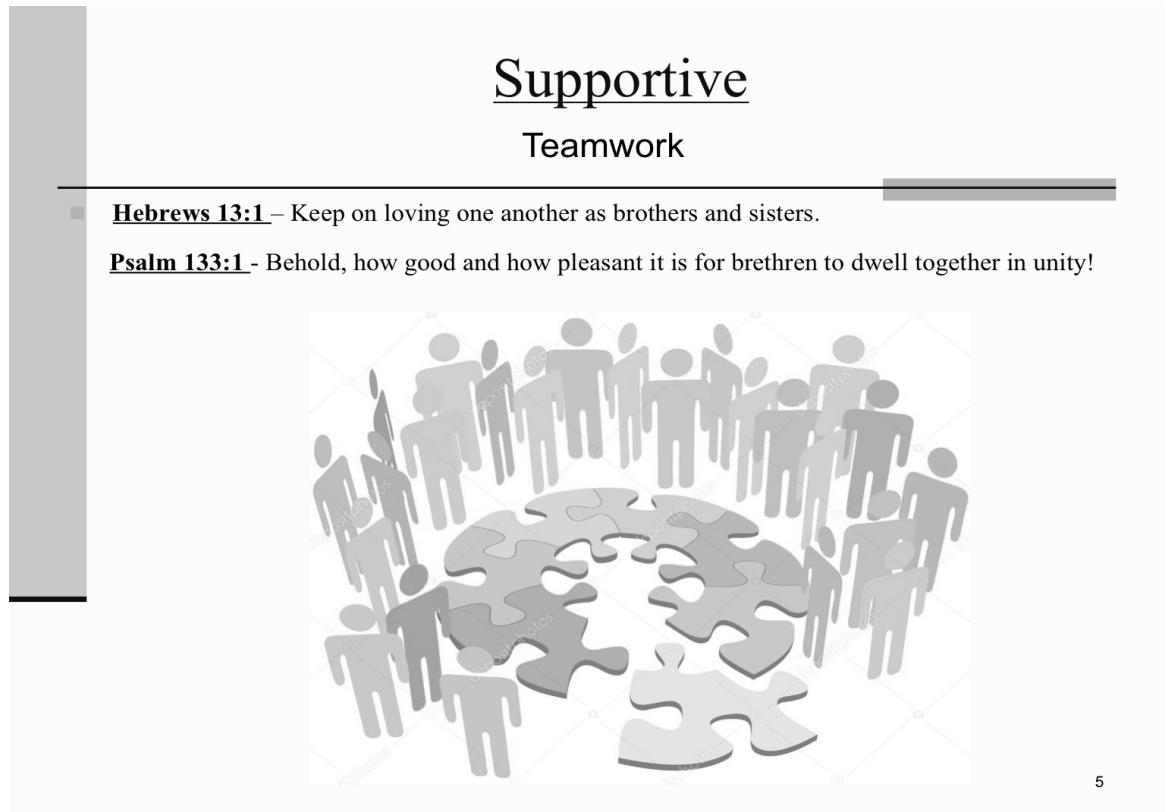


Figure 9. Supportive teamwork

The strategic plan must be structured, simple, suitable and supportive. When you are trained and released to do ministry you need to be encouraged and supported. This is where teamwork and networking or fellowshipping becomes the blessing. This is the mechanism where growth happens. Growth happens because ministry liberates you and sets you free, because you are overjoyed and free you should share it with others in the community so you began to seek opportunities to serve others.

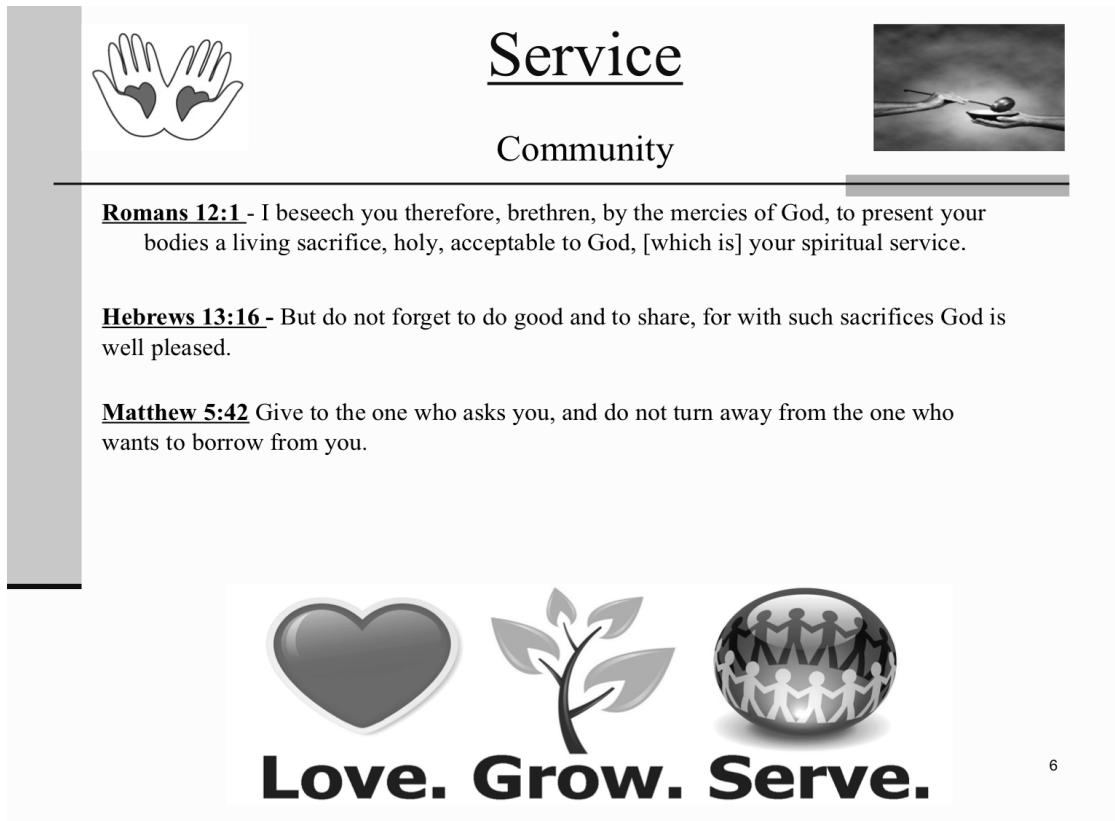


Figure 10. Service community

Although this has not been tested, there are models such as Saddleback Church with Rick Warren, the Potters House with Bishop Jakes, Willow Creek Church and many others that left traditional churches to start their own because they needed a paradigm change.

The churches just mention are huge fans of small groups. This plan will be made available for any ministry to use for the glory of God.

What Did I Learn

In reflecting on the project, the researcher is reminded throughout the sessions with his professors and mentors, they would always say the project is really about you. As the researcher comes to the close of the project he can concur with them. In looking back on all the foundational chapters, they were able to show the researcher how his theology has evolved. In the spiritual autobiography writing, the researcher reflected on being raised in the tradition of the South and joining the Marines with tradition being instilled in his life. In the contextual writing, the researcher reflected on pastoring a 149-year-old rural church that was caught up in traditions they were unwilling to change. In the historical writing, the researcher reflected on Martin Luther, who challenged the Catholic Church to depart from their corrupt traditions. In the Old Testament biblical writing, the researcher reflected on how Israel was delivered out of slavery but stalled in the desert when they desired to return to their traditions of the past. In the New Testament biblical writing, the researcher reflected on how Jesus broke the traditions of the past to save a Samaritan woman lost in her past. Finally, in the theoretical writing, the researcher reflected on how the great liberator Jesus Christ extends freedom to all from the bondage of sin through his agape love.

In analyzing the data, the researcher realized looking at this problem through the theoretical lens of tradition was only skimming the debris so many other issues in the church. He had to push other themes to the side that were beginning to emerge. The

researcher could not include much of the data into this project and clearly had to focus on where the information was converging. That convergence was at question number three. The constitution in the church is the issue for nearly all the participants and although they would like to do away with it, most of them realize it provided structure in the church. They can be divisive and dividing among members and church leaders and it takes forever to form committees and review quorums to vote on resolutions.

The researcher also learned there are some churches that are thriving, but at the cost of the church losing the intimacy it once had. Yes, smaller churches may be closing daily but there are mega-churches that are erecting. Most of these churches are young and were started by pastors who have had issues with church constitutions or been rejected in some way by mainline and traditional churches. Some of these mega-churches are so large the parishioners will never meet the pastor. Some are so large you can hide in the crowd and never participate in ministry. These churches are largely successful in thriving membership and missions because of the barriers of a church constitution being torn down. They are structured, but not in traditional ways.

It was eye-opening to the participants to see they could be doing so much more to extend themselves and their resources to the community. It was clear, once laid out on paper, most of the mega-churches started in community centers and public school cafeterias. They started as conduits running through the community that continued to flow and grow once the church broke ground.

I think the most valuable piece to this project is how, in the end, my professors were right: this project was going to reveal something about myself. In my sickness after my cervical fusion surgery, I was placed in a hard neck collar and had to wear it for four

months. I could not turn my head to the right or left. I could not move my head up or down; I was miserable. I was upset with God, asking Him why this was happening to me. To my surprise, I had a dream and God showed me that I was “stiff necked.” He said I was also writing about myself and the only way I would see it and understand it was for it to become real to me.

Is there Value for Future Work?

There are church closings, declining congregations, and diminishing communities across the United States both in rural and urban areas. The reasons are numerous throughout the denominations. Through the theoretical lens of tradition many themes emerged from this study. If something is not done collectively among the faiths, the entire religious community will be lost. Churches today are seen as buildings and not people. Churches have been sleeping only focusing on the outward appearance while people are hurting inwardly. This study left so much on the table that we could not address as there were emerging themes that were revealing themselves. For example, the recent “ME TOO” movement, which is a national campaign against sexual harassment and assault, was thrust to the forefront of the world through social media in 2017. The movement is bringing attention to recent and past events in the lives of women that have been belittled and devalued. This document provides an avenue and room for possible healing, as Jesus, the great liberator showed by reaching back into this woman’s past to dismantle it, and in doing so, he providing value in her healing so she could move forward in the future. In discussing this with my professional mentors, they agree that much can be reexamined through a physiological lens for further use to strengthen the

church and communities.

There is a commitment from the researcher to continue developing this work and expand the scope of the research beyond the stated objectives in this study. This research primarily focused on a diminishing population of the church community. There are areas that can be explored that were not a part of this research that can strengthen the hypothesis as well as open new paradigms concerning tradition. Future work is possible because time limitations were a factor in the research and analysis of this study, also the sample size can be expanded to expose not only church communities but families, organizations and governments. It is the researcher's hope that literature and a curriculum will emerge from further investigation that will provide healing, prosperity and growth as tradition is valued and honor as it is used as a platform for moving forward. Lastly, the ending of this project would be served well by a quote from Jaroslav Pelikan: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

APPENDIX A
NARRATIVE RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

NARRATIVE RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Tony J. Craddock, Sr.
A CHURCH HONORING TRADITION
THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD IN A
DEMINISHING COMMUNITY

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled *A Church Honoring Tradition through the Word of God in a Diminishing Community*. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a pastor or serve as a part of leadership in your church. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Tony J. Craddock, Sr., a doctoral candidate at United Theological Seminary, Dayton Ohio, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

Churches across America are rapidly declining and tradition is believed to be one of the causes. They have honored the traditions that have made them strong however they have lost their significance in the community because of demographic transitions and some traditions that are obsolete. If there is no paradigm shift the context will become none existent. The purpose of this study is to help churches fulfill the great commission, connect and remain relevant within the communities they are located in.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
(1) Agree to meet in person or via tele-conference to verbally respond to a series of questions. (2) The setting can be a venue of your choice and should last about one hour in length. (3) Respond freely and truthfully to the questions. I reserve the right to follow-up with sub-questions. (4) The interview will be recorded and notes will be taken. All the recorded information will be erased and shredded when the final document is complete. All of your information to include your context will remain confidential.

Risk:

Little to no risk is involved which is no more than usually encountered during average daily activities.

Benefits:

The participant should not expect to receive a direct benefit.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive compensation for their participation in the research project.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. If any information is published, I will not include any specific information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The participants will be assigned numbers. Names will not be included on any documents. The names associated with the numbers will be kept in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher will have access. Furthermore, all interview notes and documents related to the participants will be kept in a locked file. The participants' information will not be shared with anyone without the participants' written and signed consent. The data will be kept until the researcher has completed all requirements for the doctoral degree and has received a diploma. After that time, all documents will be shredded.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researcher. You are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

Any participant who chooses to withdraw from the study should contact the researcher by telephone, or email, and the participant will be withdrawn. The researcher will not use any of the participant's information in the study and all information pertaining to the participant will be destroyed by shredding.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Tony J. Craddock, Sr. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at (703)398-6166 or tjcraddock1@united.edu. You may also contact the researcher advisor's, Dr. G Martin Young at gmyoung@untied.edu or Dr. Alfred Thompson at althompson@untied.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, or advisors, you are encouraged to contact United

Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program, 4501 Denlinger Road, Dayton, OH 4542 or call (937)529-2201.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: Oct 28, 2017

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: Oct 28, 2017

APPENDIX B

QUALITATIVE NARRATIVE RESEARCH EVALUATION FORM

Qualitative Narrative Research Evaluation Form

Your feedback is critical for closure to the research project. We would appreciate if you could take a few minutes to share your opinions with us so we can serve you better.

Please return this form to the interviewer at the end of the project. Thank you.

Project Title: The Church Honoring Tradition through the Word of God in a Diminishing Community

Date: Feb 1, 2018 Researcher: Tony J. Craddock, UTS
Student _____

	Strongly			
Strongly	agree	2	disagree	4
1. Was the subject title interesting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
2. Could you relate to the subject title?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
3. Was the length of the interview appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
4. Was the interview setting appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
5. Was the communication skills of the researcher appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
6. Were the questions appropriate for the research topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
7. Was the researcher knowledgeable on the topic	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
8. Were you comfortable with how your data was handled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
9. In your opinion, was the interview too long?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
10. In your opinion, was the interview too short?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
11. Given the topic, is this something you could use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4

12. How long have you been in your position? (____20____ years)

13. Which of the following **best** describes you?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Church Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Traditional Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Church Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Non-Traditional Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Associate Minister | <input type="checkbox"/> g. Female |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> d. Senior Pastor | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> h. Male |

15. What is your highest level of Academic Achievement?

- a. High School b. Undergraduate c. Graduate d. Advanced

Signature of Participant: [REDACTED] / Date: __Feb 1, 2018__

Signature of Researcher: _____ / Date: _____

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